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COMMONWEAL

BERNARD HÄRING
Building a Creative Conscience

ROE v. WADE
The Court Barely Budges

Comments by:
Richard A. McCormick, Mary Ann Glendon, Fred Siegel, Sidney Callahan, Mary C. Segers, E.J. Dionne, Daniel Callahan, Juli Loesch Wiley, Annie Lally Milhaven, Burke J. Balch, The Editors

MICHAEL T. KAUFMAN
Poland: The Ghosts of Jews

PAUL BAUMANN
on Ursula K. LeGuin, John Updike, and Eva Hoffman
RACHELLE LINNER
on 'You Gotta Have Wa'

WILLIAM C. FRENCH'S CRABGRASS WARS

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CORRESPONDENCE

Swiss army's future

George, Tex.

To the Editors: Adolph Schalk's tendentious, "The Swiss Debate Their Army's Future" [June 2], makes no mention of several uncomfortable, but highly significant, historical facts. Hitler invaded and devoured Czechoslovakia in 1939 on the pretext that its Sudetans were really Germans. The native tongue of 75 percent of the Swiss is German; 20 percent claim French as their first language; the canton of Ticino is almost entirely Italian. At one point later in World War II the Führer had decided to rescue his faltering Italian ally via a march through Switzerland. But the Swiss military chief, General Guisan, warned him in a personal confrontation that the invaders would be fought at every step of the way. The Swiss army numbered 600,000. Hitler realized that this was no idle bluff. He shelved his bold venture and Switzerland was spared violation and the sad fate of the Czechs.

To counter Schalk's nonmilitary arguments, it is pertinent to observe that universal conscription and annual refresher training reinforce Swiss democracy and promote the "equality" clause of Article Four of the Swiss Constitution.

Having taught a long time in Switzerland and spoken with hundreds of its citizens, I am sure the Swiss will reject the November initiative.

FRANCIS WILLIAM O'BRIEN
Southwestern University

A unifying factor

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: In his article suggesting the Swiss army be disbanded, Adolf Schalk fails to address an important question: "What holds Switzerland together?"

The country is made up of three ethnic groups; class divisions also exist; and regional differences between Protestant and Catholic areas. Add that Switzerland's mountainous terrain produces the usual divisions between people who live in one valley or the other—let alone those who live in valleys and those who live in mountains—and you have a country whose survival as a united country is something of a miracle. Recall that in the mid-nineteenth century Switzerland was convulsed by a civil war between Protestants and Catholics, conservatives and liberals, and French- and German-speaking cantons.

There are many reasons for Switzerland's unity, but one of them has surely been the Swiss army. In the past, it defended Swiss freedom against the Hapsburgs at Sempach and Morgarten, and against the Dukes of Savoy at Marignagno. No one can be sure whether Hitler would have invaded Switzerland if it had not been prepared to resist, but we do know that when the Swiss foreign minister began in 1940 to talk about the need for Switzerland to adapt to the new Europe, it was General Guisan, commander in chief of the Swiss army, who called all field grade officers to meet at Rutli, the birthplace of Swiss independence, to say that it was better to die defending freedom than to live adapting to the new Europe, and thus eventually caused the appeasement-minded foreign minister to resign.

Now the Hapsburgs, the Dukes of Savoy, and Hitler are gone. But the army remains, the one Swiss institution in which all men, of whatever social class and from whatever region and ethnic group, serve together. It is the school of the nation, teaching each Swiss conscript that his country's freedom and unity are worth defending, and that the values they share with each other are vastly more important than those which set them apart. The respect in which the army is held owes as much to its function in overcoming internal divisions as to a perceived need to deter any external attack.

HENRY OWEN

The writer, now a consultant, served in the U.S. State Department as an ambassador-at-large and as head of the Foreign Policy Planning staff.

The author replies:

Henry Owen is quite right; the army has been a unifying factor in Switzerland. I implied as much by quoting John McPhee: "Switzerland doesn't have an army; Switzerland *is* an army." For Swiss dissidents, that is precisely the point; they feel that the army unifies (dominates) too much. But under closer scrutiny, the political effect can be inflated. For example, soldiers from one language region are never mixed with those of another. Where is the "unifying"?

Mr. Owen mentions the battle at Marignano in 1515, pitting the Swiss cantonal armies (there was no federal army until the nineteenth century) against the Dukes of Savoy. It was indeed a turning point in Swiss history; until then expansionist-minded, they suffered so great a massacre that they forever abandoned their ambitions for conquest. It was, then, thanks to a *defeated* army that Swiss neutrality was born.

Francis William O'Brien's thesis that Switzerland's military preparedness spared the country from an invasion by Hitler's troops has been subjected to severe challenge by Swiss sources. The

(Continued on page 446)

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COMMONWEAL

Too many abortions

One-and-a-half million abortions a year is a national scandal. Most of these abortions fall outside even the broadest reading of our prevailing ethic that allows taking the life of an assailant in self-defense or the defense of another, that condemns to death individuals guilty of capital crimes, or that authorizes the killing of combatants in time of war or a just revolution. That much we allow the police, the courts, and the armed forces. Physicians and women are allowed greater latitude when it comes to the fetus. That's the law; but it is not moral.

The law rests on the Supreme Court's 1973 decision in *Roe* v. *Wade*, which ruled that most state laws restricting abortion were a violation of the personal liberty protected by the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Almost without exception subsequent Court decisions offered the broadest possible interpretation favoring abortion and limiting restrictions. Now many people think the Court's latest abortion decision, *Webster* v. *Reproductive Health Services*, will shift the balance in the opposite direction.

We are not so sure. First, the Court has not dismantled *Roe*. Second, whatever the law, there is an abortion ethic so deeply rooted in our culture that overturning or narrowing *Roe* may have minimal effect on the number of abortions. What was once unthinkable has become thinkable; indeed, as time passes, the abortion decision is increasingly treated as one almost not worth thinking about at all. A change in law will mean little without a transformation of minds and hearts.

One might argue that *Roe* engendered this abortion ethic—this unique exception to our general prohibition of killing innocent others. But in rereading *Roe*, it is hard to find the hard-edged thinking or absolutist language that has come to characterize the way we now speak individually and as a polity on the subject. For example, "abortion on demand" and "the absolute right to privacy" are catchphrases we hear often and loudly, phrases prochoicers defend and against which prolifers rail. But back in 1973, the Court wrote: "appellants... argue that the woman's right is absolute and that she is entitled to terminate her pregnancy at whatever time, in whatever way, and for whatever reason she alone chooses. With this we do not agree." The Court went on: "[T]he right of personal privacy includes the abortion decision, but...this right is not unqualified and must be considered against important state interests in regulation." Nor was the decision the woman's alone: "All these are factors [in the abortion decision] the woman and her responsible physician necessarily will consider in consultation." It is not hard to find in these words justification for viability testing at twenty weeks as the Court did in upholding the Missouri law, or, for that matter, for upholding certain counseling and informed consent procedures that were not at issue in *Webster*.

We do not return to *Roe* in order to defend it; its usurpation of the political process

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in 1973 in favor of judicial fiat is indefensible. And if *Webster* is the prelude to a full, rational, political consideration of abortion at the state level, it is indeed welcome. But we harbor an unhappy premonition that it is not. While the Supreme Court teases the nation with a patchwork process of allowing some restrictions and turning down others, the acrimonious scramble for influence in fifty state houses and state legislatures by prolife and prochoice forces will be poisonous to our whole political system. Even worse, as we have suggested above, it is unlikely to help restore a moral perspective of a kind that will help actually to reduce the number of abortions, some of which, under the new dispensation, will be performed illegally. It is indeed a struggle for the minds and hearts of women—and men.

The best, but most difficult, place to begin is with the claim that the fetus is not nothing. *Roe* concluded that the fetus is not considered a "person" under the Fourteenth Amendment, and further on it declined to "resolve the difficult question of when life begins." In most adult humans there arises a sound intuition that somewhere between the period of conception and implantation and a later period when the developing fetus has every aspect of a human being, this is a human being, a human being worthy of protection—and perhaps that sense is nowhere more fully developed than in the pregnant woman herself. Most of us would offer a seat on a crowded train to a pregnant woman; many would offer help if she collapsed on a street or rush to her aid if she was endangered by a speeding car or threatened with a beating. It is not just her comfort or her life that is at stake, but the life of another; our immediate sense is not of one human being deserving of protection, but two. The more obviously pregnant a women is, the more surely we draw that conclusion. The fetus is something.

But so is the woman. And it is the woman contemplating an abortion who must be convinced that the fetus is something, indeed at a certain point becomes someone. Implanting and supporting this conviction has two possible starting points. The most immediate: a pregnant woman considering abortion should receive counseling that fully describes for her what we now know about fetuses and their development; if it is to be an abortion at eight weeks or at twelve weeks, she should see what such a fetus looks like and know its stage of development. Responsible counseling would also offer viable alternatives to the woman if she cannot raise the child; indeed a positive ethic of adoption and the ability of social workers to provide a woman with a serious adoption plan ought to be part of the counseling process. Does that unduly burden the abortion decision as the Court has previously ruled? Perhaps. But it is a burden that the gravity of an abortion decision warrants.

Another and more distant starting point for building the conviction that the fetus deserves maternal consideration and protection lies with a fuller development of the feminist insight that women themselves must take responsibility for their lives, the choices they make, their relationships with others—parallel to the kind of responsibility men must also exercise. Moral agency entails a kind of autonomy, self-esteem, and responsibility in which women and men act instead of merely being acted upon. Feminist thought has generally treated the abortion decision as part and parcel of that exercise of autonomy, self-esteem, and responsibility, but the decision for abortion can be read in the opposite way.

Except in extreme cases, the decision to have an abortion can simply be the end point in a series of events in which a woman has failed to take responsibility for her sexual life and become pregnant in a situation in which no family life is possible, or she has allowed herself to be sexually exploited by a man who has no intention of sharing in the care of a child. This starting point for stemming the number of abortions depends on women becoming reproductively responsible moral agents by either saying no to men who will not or cannot share the responsibilities of parenthood or by women becoming effective users of contraception. This is not an ethic that fully expresses the Christian vision of human love, or the care that men and women should express toward one another. But it is a better ethic than the one now expressed in one-and-a-half million abortions. Prochoice and prolife advocates, at their best and most sensitive, recognize this: they see that along with the unborn no less victims of this dismal ethic are the women who have abortions. If the coming political struggle can be built on the sense that there are too many abortions, that women and fetuses alike are victims of a shabby ethic, then it will be a struggle that will end not only in better laws, but in a more tolerable moral standard.

CITIZEN KOOP

Surgeon General C. Everett Koop put public service above personal, political, or religious ideology. This practice quickly made him a persona non grata among his early supporters on the conservative right—whose agenda Koop largely supported but refused to use his office to push. His impressive record during two terms in office should have qualified him as the ideal candidate for appointment as Secretary of Health and Human Services under President Bush.

Koop, however, was not selected. On July 13, he took a leave from his present post that will extend until his tenure officially ends at the close of September.

For eight years Koop was the health conscience of the nation—leading the fight against the medical neglect of children born with spina bifida and counteracting presidential indifference and public anxiety over AIDS with information and human kindness.

His other accomplishments are considerable: an effective war on cigarette smoking that has moved us a long way toward "a smoke-free society by the year 2000"; recommendations for taxes and laws to discourage alcohol consumption and driving while intoxicated; a model of compassion and tolerance in the fight against AIDS; the promotion of reality and credibility in comprehensive, early sex education; and the advancement of a public attitude toward abortion (Koop is morally opposed to it) that calls for safe medical procedures while correcting the

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social problems that make so many women think they have no better choice.

Surgeon General Koop has consistently exemplified personal integrity in public service and in that has promoted the health of the nation. The high standards Koop has set are part of the Reagan legacy we are happy to applaud.

REPORT FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE

CRABGRASS WARS

MY FATHER'S SURRENDER

My father was two years old in 1910 when William James published an essay titled "The Moral Equivalent of War." In it James argues that though war has been rendered obsolete by the monstrous advance of weapons technology, we must find a viable war substitute. He concludes that we should turn from the conquest of cities or nations to a common human conquest of nature. The "manly virtues" will be fostered not in the practice of killing each other but in having our youths join in "the immemorial human warfare against nature."

Though he never read James's essay, my father raised three sons and drafted us into James's war against nature. We fought in the backyard, the wooded side-lot, and the garden. Only an urbane Parisian philosopher like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who knew not crabgrass the way we did, could celebrate the "state of nature," we felt. At our house the state of nature—our yard—was part of the woods of my grandparents' and great grandparents' farm—Bellevue. It had been in the family since before the War of the Northern Invasion.

Those woods in their day had provided fuel for cooking and heat and lumber for the farm buildings. A section was cut as needed, thus the clearing became part of the "new grounds"—a pasture for a period, then a new cycle began a growth of oak, maple, dogwood, and tulip poplar. For years the section that was to become our yard had been used by locals from town as a free trash dump. Accordingly, my father rightly perceived our yard as under siege.

From the air, in season and out, fell a rain of limbs, leaves, and those junky tassles from walnut trees designed by God to clog up gutters in order to teach us humility and discipline. From the ground in summer came chickweed, dandelions, crabgrass, yellow jackets, and moles eating shrub roots. In spring the thaw heaved up iron and glass objects. While we harvested ancient beer cans, broken bottles, horseshoes, hunks of barbed wire, our neighbors' lawns annually emerged lush and green. We coveted neither our neighbors' house nor wife, and our neighbors owned no oxen or asses. We coveted their lawn. My father was filled with envy.

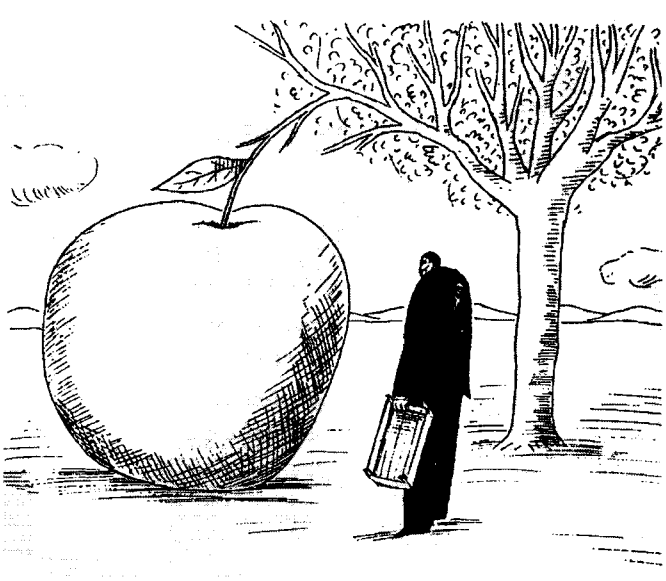
What is the cult of lawn care but displaced warfare—a mortal conflict against the forces of disorder and ugliness? We never reflected on why exactly crabgrass was an enemy. Kentucky bluegrass mixed with fescue, and rye with a touch of clover are prized as signs of civilization, marks of culture. Crabgrass and dandelion appear as hostile and alien threats to our ideal order. Religious and moral fervor heightened the energy of our crabgrass wars; the quest for an ordered lawn drew energy from the primal tendency to perceive home as sacred space, tended land as holy order, and control over nature as moral obligation.

My brothers and I hated those wars. We preferred baseball. Such wars exercised my father though. He, in turn, exercised us. My father had us uproot any intruding forces of chaos—chickweed, crabgrass, and other species alien to a well-managed lawn. We "tended the garden" and kept wildness at bay by chemical and mechanical warfare.

Perhaps what drove him in this crusade during those years was fear at the chaos of world events—World War II, Korea, the nuclear arms race, assassinations, Vietnam. Perhaps my father was frustrated in his job as a research engineer working on the first American guided missile system and, later, on hydraulics problems. Perhaps he was angry at his boss. Why else the weekly migraines? At least we could control the crabgrass. Were we not given "dominion" and charged by God to "subdue the earth"?

But time works change. Where once my father hated weeds, now he accepts them as fully integral to our lawn care program. I think that he views them as somehow on his side now, as kin, as colleagues of sorts, as fellow pilgrims. New fears of great magnitude have shown the old fears about weeds to be inconsequential. What are weeds anyway?

Many factors have contributed to my father's growing acceptance of the rights of weeds. Career success made him more relaxed. Advancing years may have bred appreciation for all that pulses with life. Perhaps it was his form of quiet rebellion for the way the government condemned my grandfather's farm and surrounded our yard with a chain-link fence guarding the perimeter of a vast federal scientific research center. Perhaps he



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resented their radiation physics lab with its nuclear reactor for test purposes placed where my grandfather's cows once grazed. Certainly my father's stroke diminished his concern about lawn upkeep. Then came his deep sadness at the death of his wife, my mother. Perhaps weeds reminded him of the wildness that haunts the edges of our lives—the dark waters of the womb, the enfeeblement and final corruption of our bodies in aging and death. For whatever reasons, we have let go of lawn care.

We accept weeds now and we feel good about it. In a world seemingly intent upon chopping down the vast tropical forests and extinguishing the most interesting animal species, the least we can do is let wild species have the run of our lawn. Greenpeace goes up against harpooners. We cultivate crabgrass. Do what you can. We have thrown off the shackles of monocrop lawn design. All species are now welcome in our lawn.

Our new tolerance of crabgrass is certainly born of laziness, but still it is good to know that our sloth converges with ecological and theological wisdom. When William James endorsed the expanded conquest of nature, our technology was not strong enough to do truly extensive damage. Now that our technological clout has extended horrifically we are realizing that we dare not damage the biosphere or we damage ourselves and our children. Where once we accepted the dogma that natural forces are the chief threat of chaos and destruction, now we fear that our own advancing industrial, technological, and military powers are the chief potential sources of radical chaos and disaster.

Shame for what we used to feel was defeat in our crabgrass wars has now turned to pride in our eccentricity. We calmly explain to people that our ragged lawn is "ecosystemically sound." We tell the busybodies that we are engaged in "bioregional research" promoting ecological diversity and "biospheric stability." Though we are Catholic we feel that there's something vaguely Buddhist or perhaps animist in what we are doing in our back yard.

If we took a survey I think we would find that many old men and women practice this sort of "letting go" of lawn care in their maturing wisdom and come to experience a sense of kinship with what Aquinas called the "community of creation." Many, I suspect, become "tillers and keepers" of both the grasses and the wild weeds. Younger men and women must similarly become the defenders of elephants, rivers, mountain gorillas, the atmosphere, and all that is of the earth.

At the end of his life Rousseau was deeply troubled and paranoid. His religious writings had offended both Catholics and Protestants and his books had been burned in both Paris and Geneva. He suspected that his friends were plotting against him. He felt himself a failure. His chief sources of happiness and restoration came to be long afternoon walks and the study of plants. In his last book, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (Penguin, 1979), he describes his turn from society to nature. Botany became his newfound solace. "I am making a modest beginning with chickweed...."

WILLIAM C. FRENCH

William C. French is an assistant professor of social ethics in the theology department of Loyola University of Chicago.

REPORT FROM NORTHERN IRELAND

THREE MOVES FOR PEACE

UNRAVELING THE WEB OF VIOLENCE

To a nation already haunted by too many anniversaries, the marking of August , 1989 as the beginning of the third decade of British troops patrolling the streets of Northern Ireland portends little more than the disturbing realization that old wounds, far from healing, continue to fester. The anniversary will be marked by the American press with its usual platitudinal (tit for tat sectarian killing) coverage of the conflict by describing a nation shackled to its own history with little hope of ever escaping the paralyzing constraints of a long, tangled past. However, just as it is disingenuous of the media to portray the entire six-county state as an urban jungle littered with paramilitary graffiti and fortified police barracks while ignoring the majestic beauty (and yes, even serenity) of much of the country, such despairing also does injustice to those denizens of Northern Ireland who are a living testament to the Christian adage that it is those individuals huddled in the shadow of the cross who cling most steadfastly and faithfully to the hope and promise of the resurrection.

John Hume, leader and founder of the nationalist Social Democratic and Labor Party which grew out of the civil rights protests of 1968-69 (see *Commonweal*, December 14, 1984), bristles at the suggestion that the political process in Northern Ireland has stagnated: "There are people who will tell you nothing has changed and that is just not true. We have to tackle the problem of division here and that is where I think we're making the progress. It's very hard for people to understand that progress because it requires great patience. Fifty years is only a blink in the life of a country, and there are people who want the problem solved last week. But if you have a divided people anywhere in the world the process is going to take time."

Hume is quick to remind skeptics that twenty years ago it was common for Catholics to be denied suitable housing and Northern Ireland's electoral system was based, not so ironically, on ownership of property. These basic civil rights abuses have since been rectified, but it is the Anglo-Irish Agreement, signed in 1985 by Garrett FitzGerald and Margaret Thatcher, that Hume believes signifies a radical shift in the power relationships of an oppressive society: "Northern Ireland was set up when the unionists threatened the British government and the British government backed down. The unionists learned that that is the way to deal with the British. Therefore, leadership in the country remained in the hands of bigots, people who were uncompromising and wouldn't share. And of course that gave encouragement to people in the Catholic community who said the only thing the British understand is force. And that is the vicious cycle that has paralyzed this country for the better part

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of the twentieth century.

"We reckon that vicious cycle has been broken through. The effect of the agreement has been that when it was signed the unionists did the usual thing: they threatened. And of course, this time, the British government stood its ground. Now the unionists' political leadership is faced with the situation that the old guard doesn't work anymore. And at the present time they are in a state of confusion. They now realize that they have to stand on their own feet for the first time and sort out relationships with the rest of the island. And we are firm but patient with them while we wait for them to do that."

While Hume and the rest of Ireland await the commencement of these long overdue talks, similar political discussions, albeit of a lesser magnitude, take place on an almost daily basis in the cramped and perpetually chilly classrooms of Lagan College in Belfast, Northern Ireland's largest integrated secondary school. Young adolescents ranging in age from 11-16 years regularly engage in class discussions and reports designed not only to facilitate the development of oral and written skills but also to tap into what vice-principal Peter Agnew refers to as "the hidden curriculum of relationships." The resulting polemical discussions focus on such topics as parental attitudes, the IRA, and the heavy-handedness of local police forces in Catholic neighborhoods. Nevertheless, the debates are reassuringly typical of that age group: what is lacking in subtlety and nuance is effectively countered by a corresponding absence of acrimony and a tacit agreement that no matter how vigorous the debate in the classroom, it is not something that should be carried over onto the Lagan College playground which, as one student pointed out, is far too small to be partitioned anyway.

Lagan College opened in 1981 with an enrollment of twenty-two children who did not wear school uniforms for fear of attack or harassment by less ecumenically minded individuals. There are presently 550 students who fill the classrooms to their capacity. The government has ensured Lagan College a future as a first-rate facility by granting it a £3 million endowment. Agnew acknowledges that the response of the Catholic church has been "lukewarm" at best but remains convinced that time, so often the enemy of progress in Ireland, will prove to be beneficial as the church moves from its role as protector of her people to reconciler of a nation.

While Lagan College sows the seeds for future harvest and John Hume struggles in the political quagmire of the present, it is the women and men of the Columba Community in Derry who have taken on the burden of Northern Ireland's past—a past which must be laid to rest before any meaningful reconciliation is possible. Believing repentance to be an essential component of the healing process, on Good Friday of 1988 the Columba Community arranged public services that would not have been possible twenty years ago. The services were highlighted by extraordinary confessions from "representatives" of the Gaelic Irish ("I confess and ask forgiveness for...glorifying violence and seeking first not the kingdom of God but a united Ireland to the point of idolatry"); the Protestant Irish ("We have taught our children that they are a superior race....We have sought to rule our country and share power with no one"); and the English ("I repent for the price that all communities in Ireland have had to pay for English national security, paying it in blood, degradation, division, famine, persecution, and exile"). The community members believe with both heart and mind that the words that were spoken on that day provided a first small step toward a peaceful reconciliation from which, finally, there will be no looking back.

Seemingly insurmountable obstacles remain. But surely it is not to our credit if in our cynicism and despair we fail to see beyond the oppressive glare of hate. The toil of John Hume, the integrated classrooms of Lagan College, and the prayers of a small community radiate a sustaining and victorious light.

VINCENT A. PUNZO

Vincent A. Punzo is a graduate student in psychology at the University of Notre Dame. This year he spent time in Northern Ireland conducting interviews on the "troubles" there.

OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

GUARDING OLD GLORY

DO SYMBOLS NEED PROTECTION?

A recent Supreme Court decision, the one which made flag burning in the act of political protest a form of protected free speech, set off a wave of embarrassing behavior. It was initiated by our president, and was joined by our always cowardly Congress. If Bush's move for a constitutional amendment to protect the flag from the actions of those very few people who want to burn it passes through all the states, as it might, it could have terrible constitutional consequences. If ever there were a political equivalent of what Bonhoeffer called "cheap grace," this is it.

The nation will probably survive. But the erosion of the Bill of Rights is not something we should take lightly. It shouldn't be so easily subjected to our most passionate feelings about symbols which we are right to take seriously; what should worry us is that politicians are so eager to look for politically popular ways to qualify our freedom to explore what that seriousness means.

We Americans have always had trouble distinguishing between legality and morality, between behavior we accept as appropriate and the behavior we must tolerate in a society which considers liberty essential. The Court has not ruled it

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entirely illegal to bite the heads off living chickens, but this does not mean, as some demagogues have suggested, that either the Court or society regards it as "all right."

To rule, as the Court did, that offensive behavior may not in some circumstances be prosecuted is not to say that the behavior is any less offensive. One of democracy's greatest strengths is an ability to live with certain grey areas; to rely on persuasion, rather than coercion; to allow an area of argument and discourse, and even grave offense, rather than limit speech and action beyond the absolutely necessary requirements of civil order.

I worry about tampering with this. Let me take the argument in favor of banning flag burning a step farther along the road (or slippery slope) that seems to be its natural course. I am a Christian, and regard the cross as a serious and sacred symbol, much more a serious symbol than the flag could ever be. I do not want to live in a society where the flag cannot be desecrated, but the cross can be. However, this is precisely what will happen if Bush's amendment is passed. Am I not right to find this offensive? I propose extending the ban on desecration to include the cross; and because we live in a pluralistic society, I am not only willing but eager to see the ban extended to include (that is to say, to exclude from any desecration) such symbols as the Star of David, the Islamic Crescent, the image of the Buddha, and the Mormon representation of the angel Moroni. I am not sure whether the Masonic compass and square should be included, but I am willing to see the issue debated.

Of course, religious symbols are not the only ones whose violation wounds many sensibilities. Children could be scandalized, upset, and wounded deeply by depictions of Santa in compromising situations (drunk, say, or lecherous). Let's ban those, too.

The point is that I can either make the flag more sacred, in law, than the cross—clearly an act of idolatry directed either toward the flag or the law—or I must reflect on what the law and its limits are, and what law is meant to do. It is the exclusion of much of what we regard as important from state oversight that has made our society a free one. The importance of symbols I willingly accept, even celebrate. But our symbols are acknowledged as weak where they need the sort of law Bush proposes to shore them up. I do not want the cross protected by law; I don't think the law will make it a stronger symbol. Though I do not compare the two symbols in importance, I think it is not healthy for Americans, Christians or otherwise, to think of the flag, any more than the cross, as a symbol which requires the help now recommended.

All the easily hysterical reactions to this issue, both liberal and conservative, surfaced recently at a student art exhibit in Chicago when a student at the Art Institute placed a flag on the floor and invited observers to walk on it, and then record their reactions. This is the sort of thing

that bores me even when it isn't trying to be offensive, but it caused a predictable reaction.

In the midst of the expectable fog, there was one serious and important question raised. Some state funds are voted for support of the Art Institute. To what extent should citizens have a right to refuse such funding, where it supports something they consider outrageous?

The reaction of a lot of people—some of whom, sadly, think of themselves as liberals—is that the denial of this funding amounts to censorship. The same argument was raised when the Corcoran Gallery canceled an exhibition of photographs, explicitly homoerotic and sadomasochistic, by the late photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. The exhibit was partially financed by the National Endowment for the Arts.

My hunch is that I would not have liked the exhibit at all. But even if it had been in honor of every act of mercy ever performed in history, or an homage to grandmothers everywhere (my hunch is that I wouldn't like those exhibits either), it seems to me (a) that no exhibit is entitled to government funding, no matter what its subject, and (b) that a gallery cancellation, even in fear of an anticipated reaction, does not amount to censorship. We should use our language (and maybe our public funding) more carefully than that.

Some liberals have argued that, because taxpayers passively fund many things with which they may not agree, the arts are entitled to a piece of the potentially offensive pie. There is a rather ugly persuasiveness to this: I am now forced to spend a good deal of my income on governmentally financed things which offend me, ranging from weapons systems to the salaries of tax auditors; why not (now that the gun is at my chest) make me fork over even more? Andy Warhol said that art is what you can get away with; so is one approach to government. My own argument is that people should be less passive. I am not unhappy when agitation of any sort makes it harder for politicians to channel my money toward the funding of abortions, nuclear weapons, or the infliction of the death penalty. Refusing support at the level of taxation is as appropriate, as democratic, as the boycott. It is as right to withhold tax money from something you object to (in the arts or in public policy) as it is to refuse to buy table grapes.

What is interesting here is the conjunction of these visual symbols, the flag on fire and on the floor, and the offensive Mapplethorpe pictures. They are allowed to stand for something, without our having to think very much about what they mean. Some people insist that funding offensive things should be compulsory, in the name of freedom. And the flag, as a symbol of freedom, is made to violate its own intended meaning—a sad irony which reminds me of a case which should instruct us now, in which a state court insisted (it was overruled by the Supreme Court) that a couple accept the slogan "Live Free or Die" on their license plates, or lose their freedom. □

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ABORTION

WHAT DOES 'WEBSTER' MEAN?

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MARY ANN GLENDON
FRED SIEGEL
SIDNEY CALLAHAN
MARY C. SEGERS
E.J. DIONNE
DANIEL CALLAHAN
JULI LOESCH WILEY
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In upholding the Missouri law that permitted testing for fetal viability at twenty weeks of pregnancy and prohibited any use of public facilities or public employees for abortion, the Supreme Court seemed on the verge of overturning *Roe* v. *Wade*. *Commonweal* asked ten knowledgeable observers to comment briefly on the July 3, 1989 decision, *Webster* v. *Reproductive Health Services*.

Richard A. McCormick

I am both pleased and frustrated by the *Webster* decision. Pleased, because I regard 1.5 million legal abortions as a national scandal, and this decision moves in the direction of acknowledging this scandal and reducing its dimensions. To some as yet unknown degree, it suggests that *Roe* was bad medicine, bad constitutional law, bad morality. It was one-eyed legislation. I am frustrated because the decision moved against *Roe* in a technical, chip-away manner that promises to leave us preoccupied in the months ahead with single-issue politics, scare tactics, worn-out rhetoric, and a disastrous neglect of other social and even prolife concerns. I believe that the nation is sick and tired not of the issue, but of the way it has been rhetoricized and politicized by both sides, and of the way it saps the nation's social and political energies. National fatigue is close to national apathy.

That is not to miniaturize the issue, not at all. Abortion is preeminently a moral problem and an extremely serious one. There are deeply felt claims on both sides of this issue. Specifically, the primacy of the woman's concern and voice in decisions about pregnancy, the sanctity of intrauterine life as a qualification of this primacy.

My own concern is not primarily the moral problem. In my view, the evidence is overwhelming that most abortions are morally wrong. In other words, I believe the claims of nascent life deserve preference over most of the claims women assert under title of "control of our bodies." The key problem is one of public policy, when many Americans do not agree (and many do not) with the moral judgment I have expressed. More specifically the problem is getting the public to engage in a civil, constructive conversation about policy amidst differing moral judgments. It is getting the public to talk about women's concerns vis-à-vis concerns for germinating life in a pluralistic society. It is attempting to discuss "middle-ground" points so often neglected. That just does not happen. Shouting does. I proposed such points for discussion in a recent issue of *Second Opinion* (March 1989). I was attacked with equal vigor by a prolife and a prochoice commentator, a symbol to me that the Supreme Court has precipitated a regional debate in fifty states which will only repeat such dreary refrains and continue to pollute public conversation for some time to come.

Maybe that is the way it has to be in human affairs.

Richard A. McCormick, S.J., is John A. O'Brien professor of Christian ethics at the University of Notre Dame.

Mary Ann Glendon

The Court's decision in *Webster* is neither the victory some prolife forces claim, nor the crushing blow that many prochoice supporters describe it as being. It does let us know that the expansive force of *Roe* v. *Wade*, and the cases that drew out its implications, has probably come to an end. Further it indicates that the Court will take a somewhat more benign view of postviability regulations, already permitted by *Roe* but routinely struck down by the Court in the past. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor emerges as the decisive voter on the Court. In *Webster*, however, she was extremely cautious about addressing any issues not directly before the Court. Thus we are unlikely to see any drastic retrenchment from *Roe* unless and until the Court must deal with a statute that is in direct conflict with it, such as, for example, a state attempt to regulate abortion in the interest of protecting the fetus before viability.

Although not in the foreground, an important aspect of the decision is its affirmation of a basic civil liberty: the right of Americans to have important issues decided by majoritarian political processes except when these have clearly been removed from the legislative purview by constitutional text or tradition.

Mary Ann Glendon is professor of law at Harvard University and author of Abortion and Divorce in Western Law.

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Fred Siegel

The Court's decision is a wild card for both political parties. Among Democrats, who have already been hurt by the abortion issue, the decision will push the party further in a culturally elitist direction, further alienating part of its once formidable blue-collar base. For the Republicans who haven't yet had to pay a substantial price on the abortion issue, the bill is soon to come due, because insofar as militants force the party to take an absolutist stand against abortion, the Republicans stand to lose an important part of their upper-middle-class, suburban-based, core constitutency.

Among prolife and prochoice organizations, the side that shows the most tactical flexibility in reaching out to the great mass of the public that supports neither of their positions—the side most willing to acknowledge the competing moral demands posed by the issue—has the best chance of winning politically. Should the pro-abortion side show willingness to acknowledge the misuse of abortion as a means of birth control, for example, they would enhance their position markedly. On the other hand, should the anti-abortion side show greater recognition of the need to honor a woman's autonomy, they could reap substantial benefits. What this entire episode suggests is that our politics has become overly dependent on court-based policymaking, policymaking that does not admit of compromise. Unlike Europe, where the legislative process reached fruition, the U.S. is now caught in an impossible dilemma because an insistence on "rights" on matters best left to the legislature is inherently destructive of both social comity and respect for law.

Fred Siegel, who covered the 1988 presidential election for Commonweal, *will be spending the 1989-90 academic year at the Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton University.*

Sidney Callahan

I am surprised and encouraged by *Webster*. I have always proclaimed a belief in the eventual triumph of a liberal feminist consistent ethic of life position in our society, but my timetable called for a hundred or more years of toil. Now a dent may be made in our lifetimes.

The moral goal to be pursued in abortion and other peace and justice issues is the recognition that every member of the human community is equal in intrinsic moral worth, whatever their other merits or powers, or lack of them. A fetus, like an infant, or a mentally impaired or retarded individual, counts as a human being. If we truly believe human lives are morally equal then we must meet the unequal needs of the vulnerable for protection and help.

The strong and able, those who are fully functioning persons capable of moral agency, have an obligation to succor those who are needy and dependent. Pregnant women who possess unique lifegiving powers are obligated not to kill their offspring, unless there is some grave medical threat to their own lives. If certain inalienable rights are intrinsic to human life, those rights cannot be rescinded through private acts of will or intention. The laws of society can only morally justify overriding a fundamental human right to life for equally fundamental moral reasons and in those rare cases when the cause of greater justice for all is at stake.

The prolife movement must now struggle to get women what they *really* need for full and equal participation in our society. Each restriction of abortive killing should be accompanied by support for childbirth, childbearing, and family needs. Women and children first, or our great ship goes down.

Sidney Callahan is associate professor of psychology at Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, and the author of With All My Heart and Mind *(Crossroad, 1988).*

Mary C. Segers

As a Catholic feminist, I am shocked at the lack of attention to women's rights in the majority opinion in *Webster*. In inviting state legislatures to enact additional restrictions on abortion, the Court's majority contends that, in a nation where more than half the population is female, justice will be done. The Court ignores the fact that women comprise only 16.9 percent of state legislators and hold only 5 percent of congressional seats. It is difficult to think that justice will result when the system of representation is so grossly distorted as to be glaringly undemocratic.

As the debate shifts from the federal courts to state legislatures, Catholics should keep in mind three points: First, the basic question still remains: Who should decide such a personal, private matter as whether to bear a child? Individual women who know the complexities of the situation? Or state legislators who are knowledgeable about insurance, taxes, and highways, but know little of women's lives?

Second, remember the consistent life ethic? The bishops' recent statements on economic justice and women's concerns? Now is the time to display a genuine respect-for-life posture: to lobby against the death penalty in state legislatures; and to support policies to combat poverty, sexism, racism, and homelessness.

Third, Catholic reliance upon a natural law heritage of right-reasoning in politics suggests that the highest priority should be given to rational discussion and reasonable compromise. Can prochoice and prolife advocates work together to reduce the incidence of abortion without coercing women? The 1974 Vatican declaration on abortion states that we must work to eliminate the root causes of abortion. This means promoting

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parental leave, child care, child support, and health care policies that will enhance women's reproductive lives.

A certain mean-spiritedness characterizes the majority opinion in *Webster*. The Court disingenuously proclaims that banning abortions in public hospitals "only restricts a woman's ability to obtain an abortion to the extent that she chooses to use a physician affiliated with a public hospital." The Court ignores the fact that many women have no choice and must use public health care facilities. I do not think Catholics should be pleased with a judicial ruling that so victimizes the young and the poor.

Mary C. Segers is associate professor of political science at Rutgers University and co-author of Elusive Equality: Liberalism, Affirmative Action, and Social Change in America.

E.J. Dionne

The decision presents major problems for both parties but the problems are bigger for the Republicans than they are for the Democrats. Until now the Republicans have been able to win overwhelming support from voters who are opposed to abortion without losing many votes from the other side. Younger voters, whose profile pollster Robert Teeter describes as "prochoice on everything," liked Republican economics and could ignore the abortion issue because they never thought the right to an abortion would be curbed. Suddenly, it might be. So these voters, like the right-to-life voters, may start voting on the abortion issue. But in their case it will be against the Republicans.

The Democrats' problem is more complicated. Many voters, especially Catholics in the North and less well-off Protestants in the South, have been voting Republican in presidential elections, but Democratic for state and local offices. Such voters are more likely than most to be anti-abortion, so if abortion becomes a major issue in local elections, the Democrats may start losing these people all the way down the ballot. There is also the prospect of very divisive primaries if prochoice Democrats challenge prolife Democrats.

The most unfortunate thing that could happen in all of this political infighting is that each side is going to try to parody the other. Some prolifers are already trying to brand their opponents as "radical feminists," somehow implying that people who believe in choice on abortion are outside the mainstream, which they are not. Some prochoicers are trying to brand prolifers as "anti-woman" implying that people opposed to abortion are outside the mainstream, which they are not. In fact, if there is a mainstream view on abortion, it can be characterized as ambivalent and worried. A majority would probably like to split the difference on abortion, but is not sure how to do so.

The prochoice side, though, is onto a good strategy when they pose the question as one of whether politicians or individual women will ultimately decide on who will have abortions. They know that when the public is offered that choice, the politicians will be losers. Politicians are already losers in another way. Before this ruling many state and local politicians never had to take a stand on abortion. Others could say that they were personally opposed but would uphold "the law of the land." Now there are no more hiding places.

E.J. Dionne is national political correspondent for the New York Times.

Daniel Callahan

How one reacts to *Webster* will depend on how one assesses the legal situation of abortion. As someone who has suppported legal freedom for women to make their own choices, I fear the possibility of significant future restrictions. I do not believe that the restrictions approved of for the state of Missouri pose any serious restrictions, though they will no doubt create some additional difficulties. The more important long-term issue is twofold. First, will this be the first of a series of decisions that will erode *Roe* v. *Wade*? If so, I would be worried about even further restrictions, and hope that some fundamental choice can be preserved in the years ahead. Second, there will inevitably be more legislative action at the state level, and it is in that arena that I see many difficult struggles coming.

I would hope that, in those struggles, those of us on the prochoice side can conduct ourselves sensibly and with sensitivity.That means taking seriously the moral issue of abortion, treating thoughtfully the opposition to abortion, resisting the temptation to sensationalize the issues, and recognizing that—in the long run—a more restrictive set of laws might have a greater chance of permanent endurance. If the choice is eventually to fall between no choice at all and total freedom for women, it would be better to settle on some moderate, even though restrictive, conditions in order to allow abortion to remain available.

Daniel Callahan, a former editor of Commonweal, *is the director of The Hastings Center. He is author of* Setting Limits: Medical Goals in an Aging Society.

Juli Loesch Wiley

When the schizophrenic Court, while retaining *Roe*, let stand the preamble of the Missouri law which held that "the life of each human being begins at conception" and that the unborn have "protectable interests in life, health, and well-being," it did more than invite state action on behalf of prenatal life. It also gave a shot of adrenalin to the already strong rationale for citizen

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action to protect those "protectable" interests.

The sit-in people—rescuers—have long argued that peacefully blocking the doors of an abortion site is not, in the strictest sense, civil disobedience because it is not *disobedient*. That is, civil law itself holds statutes such as "trespass" unenforceable in life-or-death situations. In some states, this is spelled out as "legal justification"; in other states, it's simply the common-law doctrine of "necessity."

In the last decade, out of hundreds of prolife sit-ins and perhaps 35,000 men and women arrested, the "necessity" argument has enjoyed its rare successes. Sometimes the police themselves decline to make arrests. Once a district attorney (Denis Dillon of Long Island) refused to prosecute. A precious few times—in Cedar Rapids, Iowa and in Northern, Virginia—a judge or jury has acquitted the rescuers, on the grounds that life-saving interventions are not properly subject to criminal prosecution.

Now that the findings of state legislatures are more likely to parallel the realities of embryology, the rescuers have a priceless opportunity. They can argue that civil law allows what divine law demands: that we "rescue those unjustly sentenced to death" (Proverbs 24:11). Law and truth may begin to coincide: and what God has joined together, let no one put asunder.

Juli Loesch Wiley, a member of Feminists for Life, served as Communications Coordinator for Operation Rescue in 1988. She and her husband expect to deliver their first child "into the air-breathing world" in November.

Annie Lally Milhaven

The decision of the Supreme Court saddens me. It saddens me because it portends the dismantling of *Roe* v. *Wade*, and as a Catholic nurse I know what pregnant women's lives were like before 1973. In charge of the Lying-In Hospital at the New York Cornell Medical Center, I saw two women arrive in as many weeks with Lysol-induced abortions. One had four children, the other, only eighteen years old, had none. We did not know, but soon learned, that absorbed Lysol causes bleeding from every bodily orifice. Both women died. I began to change. I reflected that whatever was wrong with abortion (and I believe there are moral issues involved), there was something more wrong with the brutal deaths of these young women.

After the legalization of abortion by New York State, I opened a twenty-eight bed unit for abortion patients. Over the years, I continued to question mass abortion for contraceptive purposes. Yet, I concluded that the frenzy around abortion seems to be less concerned with life and fetuses, and more charged up over the control of women. Still, only the woman with a developing life within her can best decide—in light of all the implications for that life, herself, and those others for whom she is responsible—what choice to make.

Annie Lally Milhaven, a former professor of nursing, is currently director of Preparation for the Second Half (a preretirement firm). In June 1989, she received her MTS from the Harvard Divinity School.

Burke J. Balch

The *Webster* decision is important to the prolife movement for two reasons. It partially unshackles the public and legislators elected to represent us from the iron and unmitigated requirement in *Roe* v. *Wade* of abortion on demand throughout the full nine months of pregnancy. Because five Supreme Court votes can now be counted for the position that there is a compelling state interest in unborn life throughout pregnancy (four votes in this case, and Justice O'Connor's from her dissent in the 1983 Akron case), it is now possible to discuss some laws that contain meaningful protections for unborn children without invariably being met with the dismissive rejoinder that they would be "unconstitutional." It may lead directly to concrete if initially limited laws that may save at least a few lives.

The second reason is related to the first.

A friend who now teaches law in the Midwest was a student at Yale Law School when *Roe* v. *Wade* was decided. He used to set up a table there at which he tried to distribute prolife literature. The reaction was universal. There was not a single person he encountered—on the faculty, among the students, or passersby—who did not consider him not only wrong but also eccentrically weird in his notion that there might be something wrong with abortion, or something significant about unborn children. He said he felt like a person who went into a crowded room with a great oaken table as its centerpiece and, when he remarked on the table, was met with puzzled expressions and concerned assurances that he was imagining things. He began to wonder about his own sanity.

Those of us in the prolife movement live day in and day out with the consciousness of death. What does it mean to say that 1.6 million unborn children die each year, that 23 million have perished since abortion was legalized? How can one comprehend the magnitude? To us, the dismissive reaction of so many intelligent, decent, and caring people who look on those haunted by this toll as fanatical eccentrics has made this truly seem a world turned upside down. But *Webster*—and the reaction to *Webster*—has changed all this. The decision reopens the argument.

The abortion question that so many thought settled in 1973 is now again before the American people. Like the slavery question, which also was thought to have been swept under the rug by a Supreme Court decision, it will not allow of being sidestepped by any thinker or any voter for years to come. And we can now say with confidence that it will not go away as long as children die.

Burke J. Balch is state legislative coordinator of the National Right to Life Committee.

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POLAND: THE GHOSTS OF JEWS

A SHARED & COMPLEX PAST

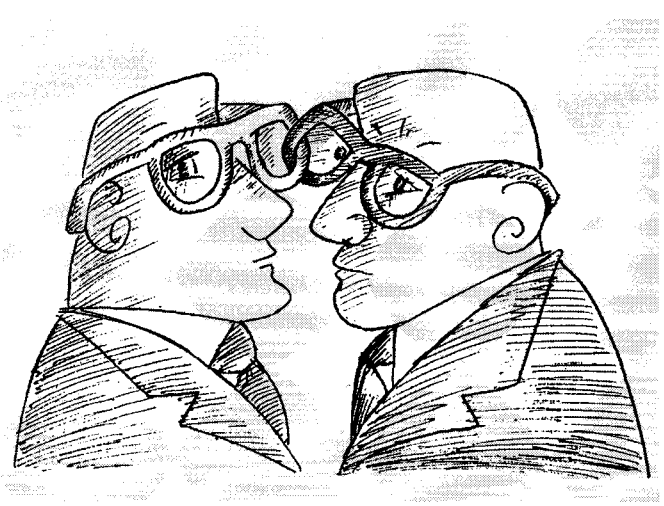
MICHAEL T. KAUFMAN

One summer day in 1961 I went to Gdansk to interview Lech Walesa. As we talked in his apartment he invited me to go with him that evening to a performance at the musical theater in nearby Gdynia where he was to be given the seat of honor in the front row. A capacity audience of fifteen hundred people filled the hall to hear a popular song and dance man named Andrzej Rosiewicz. It was not a political evening and the show was built around musical numbers and burlesque bits of sexy patter and double-entendres. Scantily dressed chorus girls strutted and kicked to the beat of a heavy-handed drummer. About twenty minutes into the program, the lights dimmed and Rosiewicz put on a tight-fitting cap that resembled a yarmulke. He picked up his guitar and began singing a lament about a long-vanished village, Lumbartow, where the beer was better and the girls were sweeter and the neighbors friendlier than anywhere else. The song was unmistakably Jewish and when the singer came to the first deedle-deedle-deedle refrain, the audience suddenly burst into spontaneous applause, standing and clapping. Rosiewicz stopped singing, peered into the crowd and in the singsong of a Jewish dialect that now exists only in jokes, declared "Aha, so there are many of us here tonight." Again the crowd stood and applauded wildly.

I looked around. I felt I was the only Jew in the theater. Perhaps, I thought, the singer might also be Jewish, but I later learned he was not. Though he was using exaggerated dialect, there was nothing offensive in the act. On the contrary, it was meant as an evocation of something worthy that had disappeared. As for the people in the audience, it was obvious that they were enthusiastically and good-naturedly clapping for Jews, for the idea of Jews, for the memory of Jews. But why? Real anti-Semitism had fouled Polish history and honor and I knew that many Jews saw Poland solely as a land of chronic and perpetual anti-Semitism where their ancestors had forever been scorned and persecuted. And yet here an ordinary crowd of pleasure seekers, not particularly intellectual or worldly, was spontaneously cheering a few simulated echoes of vanished Jewish life.

I was startled by the display and I asked people seated near me what they thought the clapping meant. Perhaps, one man said, it reflected admiration for the courageous defiance of refuseniks like Anatoly Sharansky in the Soviet Union; just as Jews had once been perceived stereotypically as Communists and pro-Soviet, they were now being stereotypically viewed as anti-Communists and anti-Soviet. Another couple told me that they considered the outburst as part of the fashion for Jews that stemmed from a nostalgia for prewar Poland. "You know," the woman said, "there is an opinion that then the cakes tasted better, the streets were livelier, and one of the most noticeable differences was that then, we had Jews." Walesa himself said he thought that Polish society was growing increasingly sympathetic to Jews as it realized how anti-Semitism was used as an instrument of rule by the Communists.

All these responses seemed to be partly true. If I had asked more people I was sure they would have supplied even more explanations, touching on matters of shame, guilt, honor, and pride. A few general conclusions, however, seemed obvious. The attitudes of Poles toward Jews were complicated, deep, and



MICHAEL T. KAUFMAN *is a former foreign correspondent for the* New York Times *and its bureau chief in Warsaw.* *This article is excerpted from the book* Mad Dreams, Saving Graces *by Michael T. Kaufman ©1989 by Michael T. Kaufman. Reprinted with permission of Random House, Inc.*

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obsessional. It did not matter that there were hardly any actual Jews left in the country. The ghosts of Jews were everywhere.

A photographic exhibit about the scant remnants of Jewish life, put together by a Catholic Pole, drew constant crowds in Warsaw, Gdansk, and Kraków. Performances of *Fiddler on the Roof* were always sold out. An appearance in Warsaw of the Israeli Philharmonic proved to be a cathartic event. When the musicians played both "Hatikvah" and the Polish national anthem, many in the hall were openly crying, In Kraków, a group of Polish students met in private homes and studied Hebrew. When Claude Lanzmann's remarkable film, *Shoah*, was released, a national debate ensued over whether the movie's portrayal of contemporary Poles making anti-Semitic comments was appropriate or not.

The major Catholic newspaper, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, used the controversy over the film to inspire a national debate over the question of how honorable, in fact, Poles had been in regard to the Jews who lived among them. To prime the discussion the newspaper printed a long piece by Jan Blonski, a literary critic. Blonski cited all the mitigating circumstances—that Christian Poles suffered enormously, that there were no Polish quislings, that there were numbers of gentiles who saved Jews, risking their own lives—but in the end he allied himself with the sentiment of a poem by Czeslaw Milosz called "A Poor Pole Looks at the Ghetto," in which the poet linked passivity and guilt. Milosz wrote:

> What am I going to say, me a Jew of the
> New Testament
> Who has been waiting for 2,000 years for
> Jesus to return?
> My broken body will betray me in His
> sight
> And he will include me, uncircumcised,
> among the accomplices of death

The article stimulated a profound reaction and for the next six weeks, the newspaper carried articles that ranged in tone from confessional and apologetic to defensive. Meetings sponsored by the influential Club of Catholic Intellectuals to discuss Polish-Jewish topics began to draw hundreds of people of all ages. University students began writing dissertations on Isaac Bashevis Singer, on the role of the Jew in Polish literature, even on Jewish tavern keepers. Both the official government press and the underground publications devoted more and more attention to Jewish contributions to Polish life. I even heard an intellectual argue drunkenly but eloquently that if Poles claimed Joseph Conrad as their own true son, despite the fact that he wrote in English, then they should stake equal claim to Singer, the Polish-born novelist who writes in Yiddish.

It was obvious that Jewish ghosts were stirring. There were many of them. Certainly, no one can stand among the barracks of Birkenau, as I often found myself doing, and not sense the passage of Jewish multitudes to the gas chambers. Virtually all Polish pupils visit such places on school trips. In the past their guides may not have always clearly distinguished between the specific sufferings of millions of Jews, Gypsies, and the agonies of others. There were times when school trips omitted visits to the Jewish pavilion at the adjacent Auschwitz work camp and instead stressed the lives and deaths of those inmates and victims who wore red badges marking them as Communists. Even now, the guides may not always point out—may not be aware—that it was only Jewish and Gypsy children who were doomed for simply being or that it was only Jews and Gypsies who were brought in from other countries of Europe expressly to be destroyed. But, even with the best intentions, exclusive martyrology can give offense. In only remembering some, it is hard not to slight the memory of others. Six million Jews from all over Europe were killed. Three million of those were from Poland. In all, six million Polish citizens died in the war, one out of every six people in the country. Not all the schoolchildren who come on the buses to Birkenau and Majdanek and Treblinka comprehend these statistics the same way as do Jews visiting from the West, but they see the Jewish stars that were carved into the wooden barracks by people awaiting death.

They see the display of confiscated prayer shawls and the bales of human hair shorn from victims, most of whom were Jewish. They quite likely may have never known a live Jew, but they are increasingly aware of the millions who died in their land.

There are two reasons for the growing dominion of Jewish ghosts in Poland. The more powerful is the simple but still incomprehensible fact and scale of genocide by the Nazis. More Jews were killed and tormented on Polish soil than anywhere else. But there is another explanation that is also hard to absorb, which is that Jews lived in Poland for a longer time and in greater numbers than anywhere else in their long history. Less than a century ago, 75 percent of all the European, or Ashkenazi, Jews in the world lived in the then trisected historical Polish commonwealth. On the eve of the Second World War, 10 percent of Poland's population was Jewish, a level that until the establishment of Israel was unmatched in any other country. All the Jewish religious national and cultural movements—Hasidism, Zionism, Bundism, Hebraism, and the rise of Yiddish literature—originated or grew largely in Poland, often in an awkward symbiosis with Poles. Only in Poland were there Jewish masses belonging to all levels of society, poor and rich, pious and secular, rural and urban, illiterate and highly educated. Despite anti-Semitism, or perhaps because of it, Polish Jews developed their own thick cultural cohesion.

In the nineteenth century, when new European nation-states were rising, the Poles failed to gain their own state. For 123 years, as their neighbors raised national flags and sang national hymns, they suffered the humiliation of statelessness, of partition and foreign domination, and in that time, among them, the Jews, even weaker, grew in population. Their number increased at a faster rate than that of their Catholic neighbors. Both peoples sustained themselves with romanticism and mirrored dreams of messianic fulfillment. Moreover, Jews, both as groups and as individuals, were more deeply involved in Polish

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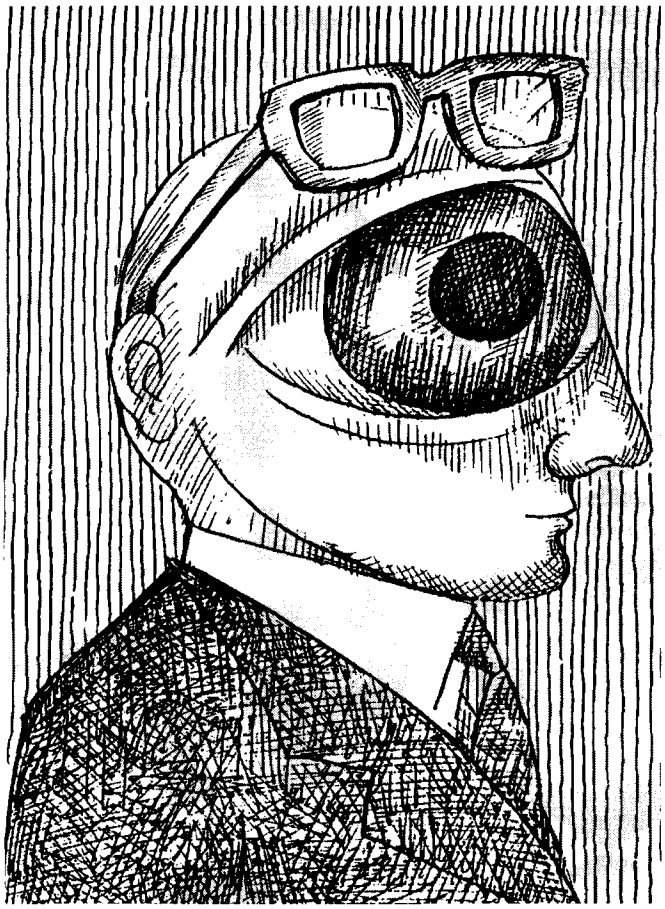

history than they were in that of any other European state. The Polish middle class for long periods of time was significantly, even predominantly, Jewish. Some nationally revered writers were Jews, and Jews took part as Jews in Poland's uprisings. No one could write a history of Poland without significantly including the role of Jews and no one could write a history of the Jews without significantly writing about Poland, and this simply was not the case anywhere else with the exception of Israel, and, to a lesser extent, the contemporary United States.

In my bones I knew that there was much more that united Jews and Poles than separated them, but often it seemed this was my secret knowledge.

There were large numbers of Jews, particularly those now living in the West, who felt that Poles were uniquely and perpetually anti-Semitic. I have heard from some of them how their parents and grandparents experienced persecution and bigotry before the war. The women had been called *parszywe zydówki*, lousy Jewesses. Their fathers, as university students, had been forced by anti-Semitic toughs to sit on separate benches in the rear of lecture halls, or they were denied access to higher education by quotas. At times they were barred from certain occupations. Life was often hard and miserable for many Jews. Every right-wing and centrist prewar political party was in varying degrees anti-Semitic and in churches some priests openly preached against Jews.

From Catholic Poles, I would sometimes hear another set of facts and impressions. They would tell how before the war 40 percent of the houses in Warsaw were owned by Jews and how there used to be a children's street rhyme that said, "Poles live on the street, Jews live in brownstones." Sometimes the Poles would bridle defensively at what they felt was the blanket accusation of national anti-Semitism. With pride as well as injured self-esteem, the Poles would note that while England, France, and Spain threw Jews out, Poles welcomed them, gave them sanctuary and even privileges. If Poland was anti-Semitic, how was it possible that professions such as medicine and law had been virtually dominated by Jews, or that Polish Jews such as Arthur Rubinstein could rise to international preeminence in their fields? My Catholic informants would note that for many Poles life was at least as hard and miserable as it was for many Jews. Some would note that communism was in large measure brought to Poland by Jews and that in the postwar period Jews often served as police and prosecutors interrogating those suspected of Home Army activity. They mentioned how some Jews, who in 1939 fled eastward from Hitler's invading armies, presented flowers to Soviet commissars who invaded eastern Poland two weeks later.

Often my head would literally ache from trying to sort out the contradictory subjective memories of Poles and Jews who all saw themselves as victimized peoples. Clearly the history of the entire seven-hundred-year relationship between Jews and Poles was viewed very differently by Jews and gentiles, with Poles generally stressing their hospitality to a people banished by others while Jews emphasized their persecution.

As these distinct views of the Jewish past in Poland moved forward to encompass the period of the Second World War, their disparity widened still further and confusion grew. Everyone who was over fifty years old had real memories of horror. At the very least, Poles had seen roundups or street executions of Jews and, in some cases, of Poles. They may have seen mass graves, walled-in ghettos, or trains carrying human, mostly but not exclusively Jewish, cargoes to concentration and death camps. They may have seen Poles taken to work battalions. Many remember hunger. With so many impressions and experiences it was hard to sort it out according to neat categories of guilt, honor, and valor.

For Jews, and for much of the world, the greatest tragedy of the war had been the Holocaust, in which the Jewish people very nearly perished and in which Jewish children, even those too young for any sins, were marked for death by the Nazis. For Poles, the greatest tragedy was that they lost their state, a loss that many of them feel has yet to be redeemed. The stress that each of these peoples placed on their own catastrophic losses often was viewed by the others as insensitivity to their pain. Understandably, Jews see only the awesome murder of their brethren. Often they ignored or belittled the sacrifices of the Poles, and even worse, assigned them leading roles as collaborators in the extermination of the Jews. On several occasions visiting Jews told me that the Germans built the camps in Poland because they could enlist Poles to build them. These assertions were illogical. The death camps were built in Poland because that is where the bulk of Jews lived. The Nazis wanted to limit the costs of transport. As for building the camps, it seemed clear

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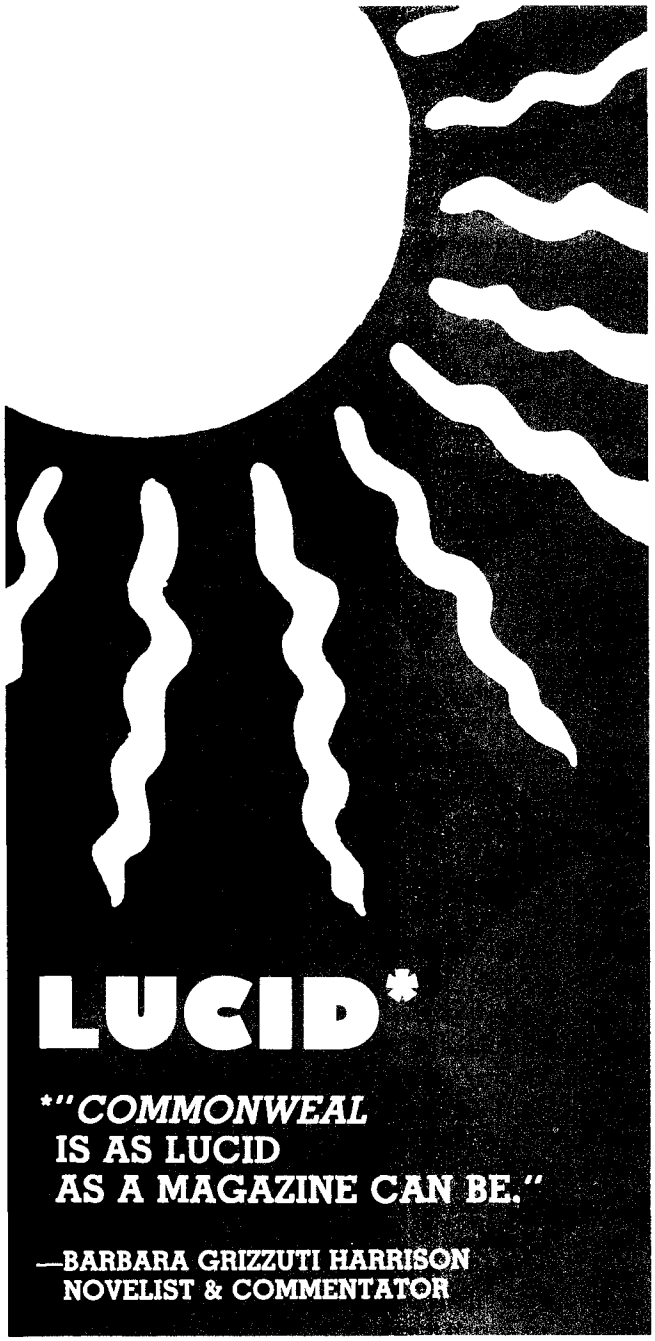

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that convict laborers, threatened with death and torture, built what they were told to build, whether they were Poles or Jews. Poles, who rightly view themselves as victims of the war, were often offended by such charges, often noting defensively that they had lost more people than any other group except the Jews.

Among the Poles there were righteous gentiles, people who, at a risk of death, hid and rescued Jews. In Poland, unlike in Western Europe, harboring Jews was punished by summary execution. That is cited sometimes by Poles explaining why there weren't more such people, and this is persuasive. Yet, taking up arms against the Germans was also punishable by death, and this did not prevent more than a hundred thousand Poles from joining the Warsaw uprising, and a whole nation took part in an underground conspiratorial state. Presumably there were many more people willing to run the risk of death for their idea of patriotism than for a sense of brotherhood with a still weaker group of people, who were considered different by many Poles and alien by some. It may be lamentable, but it also seems all too human.

Then there were also numbers of Poles who enriched themselves as *szmalcownicy*, which literally means people who render chicken fat, but which was used to describe blackmailers and extortionists who lived off Jews who were passing as Aryans outside the ghetto walls. They might force a man they suspected of being Jewish into a hallway to check if he was circumcised or not. If he was, they would extort money from him under threat of exposing him to the Nazis. Some took over the houses and properties of Jews. The underground Home Army had declared that the betrayal of Jews was punishable by death, but then that same Home Army had anti-Semitic units who would not accept Jews and who even published in underground papers articles envisioning a victorious Poland free of Jews.

The more I heard of wartime recollections, the harder clear judgments became. What was anyone to think of the man I knew who saved Jews but habitually still used anti-Semitic language, talking of kikes? Or, how is one to judge Zofia Kossak-Szczucka? Before the war she was an austerely pious Catholic whose view of Jews was that as many as possible should convert to Catholicism. She was similar to a good many other people who felt that Jews who did not convert should leave Poland for Palestine or wherever. But when German fascists began herding and killing Jews, she knew it was her duty, precisely as a Polish Catholic, to assist Jews. This prim, patrician woman, already in middle age, took mortal risks daily as she set up and maintained the Home Army's division to rescue and help Jews.

There was a farmer who told me that he had taken in a Jewish couple one morning and hidden them. That afternoon, when another two Jews came to him, he turned them over to the police. He said he did it to deflect attention from his farm and to save the first two who came to him. That couple survived the war under his care. At the ghetto hospital in Warsaw, a nineteen-year-old Jewish nurse was admired by the staff for the strength she showed in smothering newborn babies to spare their mothers the inevitable pain of watching the children die slow deaths of starvation. Heroes? Villains? I was not there. □

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BUILDING A CREATIVE CONSCIENCE

RESISTING MORAL RIGOR MORTIS

BERNARD HÄRING

The following article originally appeared, in somewhat different form, in an April issue of the German Catholic weekly *Christ in der Gegenwart*. It is published here in a translation by Ingrid Knapp, with adaptations by the editors. (See also *Commonweal*, February 10.) Bernard Häring, a Redemptorist priest, was formerly professor of moral theology at the Academy Alphonsianum in Rome and is the author of a number of works in widespread use as textbooks in his field. Monsignor Carlo Caffarra, prominently mentioned in the article, is president of the John Paul II Institute of the Lateran University and a consultant to the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

THE EDITORS

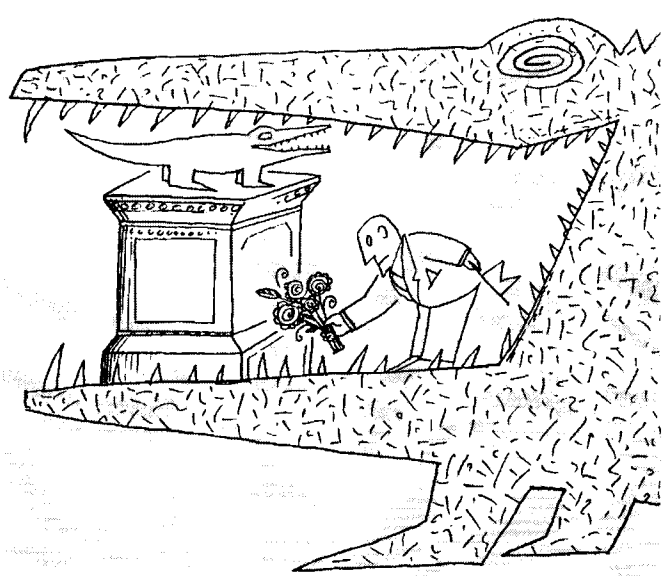
Two concepts regarded as useful, indeed critically important, by a majority of Catholic theologians today have recently come under attack, though in caricatured form. These concepts are the principle of "consensus" and the idea of the "creative conscience." They have been linked together in a misrepresentation according to which conscience alone is held to "create" the norms of good and evil, and moral truth is "determined" by consensus, or concurrence. Those who make these attacks, notably Monsignor Carlo Caffarra of Rome, would restrict the quest for truth in behavioral matters to methods that are solely speculative and deductive. In their view the search for underlying unity among varied traditions is inherently suspect, leading necessarily to compromise and error, and the conception of conscience as creative is equated with lawless individualism.

It happens that these criticisms, to use the mildest possible term for them, have been brought into play in the context of the dispute over the morality of contraception; as will be seen, however, they hold a broader significance. This is not a mere academic dispute over fine points of methodology in ethics. It has to do with basic attitudes toward the world and the meaning of human life.

On the first point: *Pace* Monsignor Caffarra, consensus-seeking is not nose-counting—determining moral truths by the numbers. Neither is it theological log-rolling—trading concessions for the sake of an inauthentic unity. Rather, it rests on the mystery of the law of love and life, which is written in the heart and echoes in the core of conscience. The law of love is indeed universal. But always and everywhere, this law is read in a historical situation, and the consequence is a pluralism whose legitimacy can be denied only through a naive impulse to impose one's own opinion on all ages and all cultures. When behavioral norms differ, one must ask whether the differences rise out of historical circumstances, and whether, despite the differences, the norms themselves serve the law of love.

Consider two examples, both having to do with Africa, both concerned with the regulation of birth, both reflecting the *ethical* significance of historical circumstance. With the help of missionaries, catechists, and others, we examined the methods of birth regulation traditionally followed by African peoples. In all the Bantu tribes (which constitute about half of black Africa) and also in many other tribes, a sacral norm requires that a new pregnancy may not occur while the mother is breastfeeding a child; for she cannot simultaneously nourish two children, one at the breast, one in the womb, without threatening life.

The solution combines two methods: strong, consistent nursing (which impedes ovulation) and *coitus interruptus*. Every mother knows she is obligated to teach her daughter before marriage how to help her husband interrupt intercourse on time. Missionary doctors and native nurses have described to us how guilty young mothers feel, how strongly and publicly they are reproached, if a pregnancy comes about within the



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critical interval. Why has this norm maintained a strong consensus over such a huge continent right up to the present? Behind this specific form of contraception stands the high value of life, a value experienced as holy.

Coitus interruptus was of course condemned in the encyclical *Casti connubii* (1930), the forerunner of *Humanae vitae* (1968), on the basis of what was considered to be revelational proof in the book of Genesis (38:6-11) of the absolute evil of contraception. When Onan's brother Er died childless, their father Judah instructed Onan to "perform the duty of a son-in-law and raise up offspring for your brother." But: "Since Onan knew that the offspring would not belong to him, he let his seed fall to the ground whenever he slept with his brother's wife, in order not to provide descendants for his brother. But Yahweh was displeased with what he had done; and therefore he let him die." For the moralists whose views are embedded in *Casti connubii*, this was a condemnation of contraception. Even without the benefit of skilled biblical criticism, however, it is clear from the text that what is branded evil, "detestable," is rather the refusal of the levirate obligation, which was legally bound with polygamy.

Interestingly, the levirate obligation exists to this day in almost all tribes of black Africa. Whoever refuses it because of the church's condemnation loses his good name and is plagued by his conscience. Today such norms strike us as strange. But polemicists who deny their relevance must somehow explain how the norms evolved and have persisted with sacral sanctions over whole continents and through many centuries—or so long as the socio-economic, cultural, and demographic-political situation does not change fundamentally. If church morality is to be proclaimed as operative for the entire populated earth, we require a deeper understanding of the historicity of human culture, including revised behavioral norms—an understanding, for example, that for millennia a need existed to exploit fertility to the utmost in order to assure the survival of clan and tribe, indeed of the human race. Christian theology cannot afford to flee from such historical realities by deriving its moral precepts only from abstract reflection on biological processes. The God in whom we believe is the God of history and of historical action. Faith therefore includes historically based thinking. And today, in dealing with the control of fertility, it must acknowledge the colossal ecological crisis that rises in great part from propagation.

Concerning the second question—is there a "creative conscience?"—for me the answer can only be Yes. Consider, first, the opposite case, that of a person whose conscience is wholly occupied with constrictions and prohibitive norms. Whenever possible, such a conscience will hold itself literally and precisely to norms that are presented as completely inflexible. Where there is conflict between two or more norms, the conscience will be confused; it will usually choose the path of least resistance, of the lesser evil, but with feelings of ambiguity, fear, and guilt. Such situations are not rare, and they do not arise only in the bedroom but also in the many dilemmas encountered by parents, politicians, doctors, nurses, workers, executives, pastors: by every human person.

When conscience is so understood that the relationship with God is conceived in terms of literal obedience to static, inflexible norms, it places such high demands on the well-intentioned person that he or she can hardly conceive any new ideas leading to spontaneous generosity. At most, he or she will try to perform works of "supererogation," as legalistic morality describes actions beyond the call of strict duty, in order to achieve the "state of perfection."

Anyone who has sought to work therapeutically with the paranoid and the guilt-ridden knows that a conscience saturated with strict prohibitions becomes sterile, the opposite of creative, and so does the life of the person thus governed. The conscience challenged by norms that are contradictory, and yet that seem not to allow flexibility (no exceptions, no *epikeia*, no *oikonomia*), is literally sickened, with devastating consequences for the relationship with the lawgiver God. In my own work in therapy and spiritual direction, I have often dealt with victims of this conception of the inflexibility of all norms. Overcome by this "rigorism," they live in constant torture and fear of wrongdoing, but lack the power to see opportunities for doing good above and beyond the law. The capacity to love dies out.

And yet, the creative conscience exists for all who have understood what Paul said in the baptismal lesson: "You are not subjects of a regime of law, but rather one of grace" (Romans 6:14). Confronted with the need to choose—as we all are daily and hourly—the healthily raised Christian focuses his or her gaze on God's grace and benevolence; in the face of the constantly new challenges posed by love of neighbor, such a person asks not so much, "Must I do this?" as "How can I best repay the Lord here and now for all the goodness God has shown me?" When we form our consciences primarily in response to the guiding laws of the Gospel and the Beatitudes, and devote ourselves unflaggingly to putting them into practice as best we can, we will continually make new discoveries, and they will be seen not as onerous or demanding but as invitations to growth.

An example of urgent importance now is the precept of nonviolence, the redeeming and healing love of conciliation, as it is illuminated in the four Songs of God's Servant (Is. 42:1-9; 49:1-9a; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12) and even more clearly in the life and suffering of Christ. Mohandas Gandhi, who examined the Sermon on the Mount daily, and who accepted into his own conscience all that the sacred writings of Hinduism and Buddhism expressed about nonviolence, is a clear example of the creative conscience. With nearly flawless clarity he showed humanity that nonviolent liberation exists, that nonviolent solutions to conflict are possible. His moral sensitivity taught the West: If you do not free yourselves from the ideology of war and of violence and adopt nonviolent conciliatory love in its stead, there will be no more salvation for you. Gandhi was able not only to share this conviction with friends and followers, but to teach them how to become creative in discovering in each situation the correct and practical means of expressing nonviolence, of bringing conciliatory love—both of justice and of opponents—to bear. More will be said of this below.

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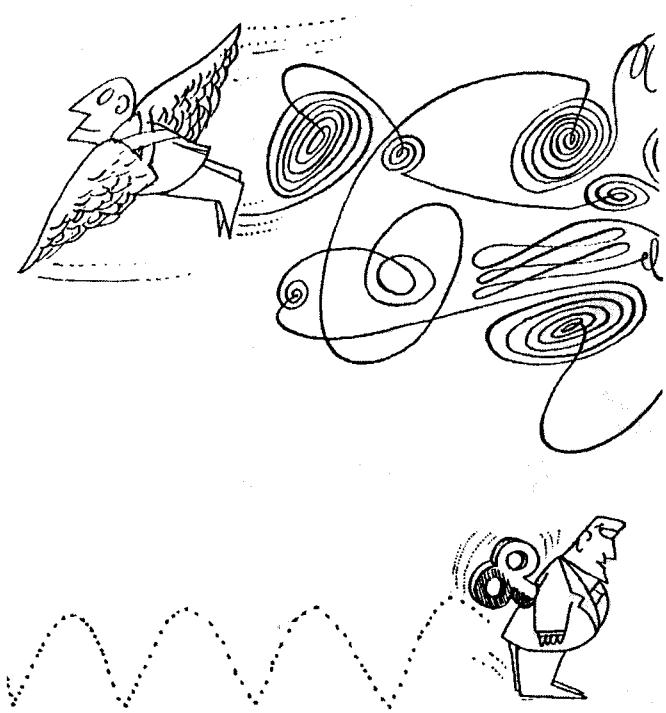

All the true prophets of Israel were gifted with a creative conscience. They scourged heartless legalism, they deplored senseless battles over human statutes and moribund traditions. The lives of all our saints—canonized or not—are a clear testimony to creative freedom and creative faithfulness. Conscience was for them the eye of love that discerned new paths toward the historical realization of the kingdom of law and justice. Not rarely their insights led to the abandonment of hardened and unnecessarily rigid norms—a course always found objectionable by legalists. Good lives of saints are an inexhaustible source for the stimulation of an increasingly creative conscience (and for the training of moral theologians). Conscience-building is primarily a mediation of values and an introduction to the recognition of values in the light cast by the love of Christ. Building a creative conscience means getting to know Jesus, and through him the meaning of love; it rescues us from mechanistic images of the conscience and immunizes us against fanatical legalism.

All this has been opposed, indeed denounced, in the writings, speeches, and interviews of Monsignor Carlo Caffarra, whose views must be given attention because of his position and because of his reported closeness to the pope. In a recent interview (*Rheinische Merkur*, March 24), he is quoted to this effect:

> The idea of the autonomous conscience that ultimately produces the truth about good and evil creatively and by itself—a notion that is generally taught and propagated today—may under no circumstances be brought into discussion. For this view signifies a total—I repeat, a total—deformation not only of Christianity but of religion itself, because it is connected to the negation of the truth of creation. What [these] people really want is to uphold the principle: Truth emerges by consensus.

The approach which Caffarra challenges here has been developed by Alfons Auer, Franz Bröckle, and many others: An understanding of morality that is autonomous *in the context of faith and the faithful community*, and that is concerned with the "world ethic"—that is, with Christian responsibility in the formation of the world and in the temporal sphere, in which we must work together with other people. *Pace* Caffarra (again), nobody is talking about a creative *production* of the truth about good and evil—an absurd notion—but about the step-by-step *discovery* of that truth: the discovery of our collective responsibility, the finding of correct and adequate means to serve the goals of love, justice, and peace. We emphasize constantly that the autonomy meant here is grounded *theonomically*: for we know that God wants us to try to realize in history the commands for love, goodness, mercifulness, justice, and freedom, while trusting in God's Holy Spirit and engaging in humble dialogue with our fellow Christians and all fellow humans.

For all of us the context is always that of faith, nourished by the word of God in solidarity with the entire community of believers, with the entire people of God, with all the redeemed, and obviously also with the pope and the bishops. Even in Immanuel Kant, who coined the phrase autonomous morality, there is no suggestion of a "negation of the truth of creation"; even for him autonomous conscience was based in theonomy, in belief in the Creator. For the Catholic and Evangelical ethicists who speak of an autonomous conscience or an autonomous morality, faith is indeed a strong and joyous thing, and rootedness in the community of believers is a matter of course that is nevertheless often emphasized. Autonomy does not oppose God's law of love but rather it opposes heteronomy, external determination by mere ideology. The fostering of consciences spontaneously responsive to the law of love in differing circumstances is not to be equated with a "negation of the truth of creation."

Any imputation that concern for consensus means acceptance of the supposition that "truth emerges by consensus" is similarly ill-grounded. What we are saying is that moral standards must be proposed and defended with arguments grounded in common experience and reflected upon in solidarity, in such a way that they are capable of engendering consensus or become increasingly so. If, in contrast, a behavioral norm is drummed in, in a one-sidedly authoritarian manner and with the use of fear-evoking terms ("opponent of God, enemy of being, of life, of love..."), and without consideration of personal and historical consequences, it becomes ever less capable of winning assent, even for those aspects of the norm that are correct. An apt example is the norm that calls for "family planning as much as possible through natural methods corresponding to the rhythms of fertility"; a standard that is entirely capable of gaining approval even beyond the bounds of the Catholic church—but only if in this area as in others one recognizes the generally accepted criteria of medical ethics, and only if one refrains from distortion, exaggeration, legal threats, and the like. Monopolists of "The

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Truth" who do not believe they must join with all other people in the world in the search for a better understanding of truth are not good discoverers or disseminators of truth.

The conscience is truly on the path toward "autonomy"—that is, toward achieving a personal life lived according to the law of love—insofar as it allows itself to be led by God's Spirit, which works in everything, through everything, and wherever it wants. The Christian discovers the law written in his or her own heart, and reaches his or her own theonomically based autonomy, only to the extent that his or her conscience really becomes *con*-scientia, *syn*-eidesis, a knowledge and apprehension of the good in solidarity *with* all people. The Second Vatican Council put it this way: "By faithfulness to conscience, Christians are connected with other people in the search for truth and for a truthful solution to all the many moral problems arising in the individual's life and in life in a society with others." Called upon by Christ to achieve a healthy conscience, a redeemed autonomy, free from external determination, we can reach that goal only when we make honest efforts to understand the convictions and statements of others, and to invite them to join with us in understanding and reconciling our differences. Doing this is not manufacturing truth but earnestly trying to find it.

In the world today there exists no better or more urgent example of the need for consensus-seeking than the still nascent movement to establish nonviolence as the only appropriate, sensible, tolerable, moral response to conflictual situations. Should we not be all united in the creative search for the complete truth of evangelical nonviolence, of the conciliatory love that is the sign of the true Christian, the mark of the redeemed? Ought we not join with all our strength and vision in the invention of nonviolent means of common security, entailing as it does the pursuit of worldwide justice and of a responsible stance toward God's creation? Such a commitment is an essential testimony of Christians, a saving truth for humankind. As yet this truth does not command an adequate consensus, but it is my conviction that one day it can. We Christians must unite ourselves in this with the best representatives of Taoism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Islam—with all people of good will. In doing so we must not impute to those who remain convinced of the need to rely on military means of defense the status of being "opponents of God, enemies of creation, of love, of justice, of peace." To make our message of nonviolence heard, we must ourselves listen, acknowledging the difficulties, admitting any demonstrated flaws in our own reasoning. And, if we are able to approach this now crucial topic with reasonable arguments and realizable proposals, as well as with testimony to our specific Christian beliefs in the nonviolent Son of God and Redeemer, then old problems like that of meaningful family planning can be solved with relative ease. If, on the contrary, the very notion of encouraging the formation of creative consciences is officially, forcefully, and effectively discouraged, along with the quest for commonality in the planet-wide search for worthy moral goals, we Catholics will be led into refusing a duty imposed by history, an invitation extended by Jesus. □

STAGE

VISITORS FROM ABROAD

'NARCISSE MONDOUX' & 'ARISTOCRATS'

Until *The Passion of Narcisse Mondoux* opened at the Apple Corps Theatre this spring, Gratien Gélinas had not been on a New York stage since 1951, when he brought his *Tit-Coq* to Broadway. Gélinas, who created Fridolin on the radio, was then—and still is—the best loved actor in Québec. *Tit-Coq*, the story of a reluctant French Canadian soldier who hides his vulnerability and his search for a family beneath the strut that gives him the titular nickname, was the most popular Québecois play of the late 1940s. A reviewer in *Le Clarion*—a gent named René Lévesque, who went on to do more flamboyant things—called it, "One of the most original and most poignant works in modern theater." New York critics, who found it more sentimental than poignant and who chided it for what they perceived as structural faults, failed to respond to it with the enthusiasm of the home folks, and Gélinas folded the production after three performances. Brooks Atkinson later reported a flood of letters from Canadians who felt his review to be less a judgment on a play than an attack on a sacred text. As I remember the production after almost forty years, Gélinas gave an ingratiatingly abrasive performance in a fairly obvious play that reflected the author's background in radio and popular theater. The local nuances that made the play so important to Québecois audiences—some of which would have been lost in the translation into English—largely escaped me.

Now Gélinas is back with a new play and some of the same double responses are inevitable. *Passion* is not as ambitious as *Tit-Coq*, nor as heavily freighted with nationalist significance. The production can afford to be amiable, as likable as the two performers—Gélinas and his wife Huguette Oligny, the Marie-Ange of the 1951 *Tit-Coq*. Oligny has been back in New York since then—in 1958, when Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde brought Molière to the old Phoenix Theatre. *Passion* is a two-act conversation in which Narcisse, who has come to declare his long unspoken love for the recently widowed Laurentienne Robichaud, loses the conventional male attitudes instilled by the small Québec village which formed him and becomes an incipient feminist, supporting Laurentienne in her candidacy for mayor. There are some funny lines (I am helpless in the face of word-jokes like, "the little black-haired one is Blanche") and a great many obvious ones as the play moves quietly to the expected ending in which the new political alliance promises to become a romantic one as well. The play is negligible, except that it reflects the distance Canadian villages have come since Tit-Coq strutted the boards, but its value lies not in its up-to-date ideas or its old-fashioned dramaturgy but in its service as a vehicle for Gélinas and Oligny. As an unlettered master plumber, a self-made man, Gélinas places himself foursquare on the

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stage, his stance as blunt as his words; he seems to chop his way through unfamiliar territory, momentarily retreating to take in a new idea and then pushing forward, arms flailing, as he becomes an advocate for what he scarcely perceived seconds before. Oligny, by contrast, is elegant, cool, ironic, a classical actress pretending to be a village widow. The styles should clash, but they end by playing off one another in a way that makes an attractive couple of both the performers and the characters.

The Passion of Narcisse Mondoux, scheduled for a limited run, will be gone by the time this review appears, but another visitor—Brian Friel's *Aristocrats*—has moved from the Manhattan Theatre Club to an open-ended off-Broadway run and looks to be around for some months. Friel's plays have a way of turning up years after their initial Dublin productions; *Aristocrats*, which was first performed at the Abbey Theatre in 1979, was done last year in London and, probably because it was well-received there, has now made its way to New York. Not that it is a visiting production in the sense that Gélinas's work is. Only the director (Robin Lefevre) and Niall Buggy, in the demanding role of Casimir, have come from the London production; the rest of the cast is American, and a fine ensemble job they are doing of Friel's work.

Aristocrats brings the O'Donnell children together at Ballybeg Hall in Donegal for the marriage of the youngest sister and keeps them there for a second act to bury their father. The play is constructed of the querulous and loving cross-talk of the group which manages to reveal the ways in which district Judge O'Donnell, a tyrant in the name of tradition, ruined the lives of his children. The oldest daughter, who has been forced to farm out her beloved illegitimate child, spends her days nursing the father who abuses her for betraying the family; the middle daughter is an alcoholic unable to have children (I don't think that that can be laid to Daddy's door); the youngest is a pianist who was not allowed to pursue her studies and is about to marry a man twice her age; the only son, Casimir, is a feckless homosexual who lives in Germany with an imaginary family—a wife and two sons. Except for Casimir, who has invented a Ballybeg he can savor at a distance, they are all ready to let go of the big house, which they cannot afford and which has never been much of a home to them. Only the alcoholic's husband, an upwardly mobile village boy, sees that there is something to lose, but his Ballybeg, the view from below, is scarcely more reliable than Casimir's.

It is tempting to suggest that Friel, who would later adapt Chekhov and Turgenev, wishes to generalize from the O'Donnells to the Irish Catholic aristocracy as a whole, as the title suggests, but the play has a built-in warning against imposing meaning on the script. A visiting American scholar, whose main function is to elicit true and false exposition, sees the family as one example of his theory about aristocratic decline, getting the sense of the family without the feel of it. It is the feel of it—a family in spite of itself—that gives *Aristocrats* its stage life. Perhaps it is enough to visit and to sympathize with the O'Donnells as they get ready to go their separate ways, leaving the decaying mansion and the imaginary croquet court which may represent the Catholic aristocracy. There I go again, but, then, you know what American scholars are like.

GERALD WEALES

SCREEN

THE MINERS OF CUMBRIA

WARD'S 'NAVIGATOR'

The Navigator: An Odyssey Across Time, winner of six Australian Oscars, is surely the strangest film released in years. An odd but moving blend of fantasy and spirituality, it is one of those rare films genuinely "not to be missed" (the last was, perhaps, *The Last Emperor*).

There have been plenty of recent "dark ages" fantasies comparing the Middle Ages with the present: *Conan the Barbarian*, *Dragonslayer*, *Ladyhawke*, etc. On a higher level, Barbara Tuchman found fourteenth-century parallels to the present in *A Distant Mirror*. *The Navigator* adds something rarer: contrast.

To be sure, *The Navigator* links the Middle Ages and the present with several key images, especially involving the Apocalypse; one suggested link is plague, bubonic or AIDS. Equal to its sense of relevance is the movie's respect for the Middle Ages, especially for medieval man's sense of community as a defense against human frailty. The film has elements of a meditation about time and the inescapability of different forms of good and evil in all historical periods. Provocative contrast is implicit in the moving, often expressionist cinematography: black and white for way-back-when; color now.

In a grim, medieval mining area in Cumbria, villagers fear the coming of plague; they fight off refugees "from the east" (meaning east of their corner of Northwest England) to prevent any contagion. These people live in an enclosed world, with only a dim sense of a larger outer one; only one of their menfolk, Connor (Bruce Lyons), has any broad experience of the world beyond.

Director Vincent Ward, who also wrote the screenplay (with Kelly Lyuons and Geoffrey Chapple), plays a bit too much with the texture of his film, alternating between dreams and fact, visionary and realistic modes; the playfulness provides for a surprise near the end, gimmicky but still poignant. But the middle is rock solid, detailing how the villagers, driven by their sense of peril, undertake an adventure to place a cross on a church steeple "at the far end of the world" in the belief such an "offering" will save them. They are guided by Connor's young brother, Griffin (Hamish MacFarlane) who has dreamed of this as their only way out: he is their "seer," regarded both comically and reverentially by older men who tease him affectionately and fear his power. At Griffin's prodding, four men burrow under their mines (in "a journey to the center of the earth"); they come up at night in Auckland, New Zealand. "God's city!" Griffin

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declares at its lights, one of many wonderful bits of naiveté with hidden truth. *The Navigator* gets away with this magic—as does *Field of Dreams*—by providing no explanation at all.

Unaware of where they are, Griffin, Connor, and their comrades search for a blacksmith; they find a steelworker, who mistakes them in their bizarre hoods for "Hare Krishnas" and goes about forging them a cross. Between him and the church they seek ("look for the tallest building," they tell themselves) lie many a danger: modern traffic, noise, speed; Connor gets trapped on a terrifying ride on the front of a train. In one magnificent scene, crossing Auckland harbor in a boat with a white horse they've stolen, the time travelers are confronted by a terrible sea beast; "feed it the horse," they shout, not understanding the nature of a submarine. Or perhaps understanding too well: recall the film's origins in a country that has banned warships with nuclear weapons. Director Ward shoots the steel Leviathan for every bit of stark, suggestive menace he can.

Even with its uneven moments—the plot supplies too many occasions for wondering just what's going to happen next; the film's Celtic score seemed a little prefab-eerie; one miner has too goofy a face, resembling a hayseed village idiot in a Monty Python skit—*The Navigator* is a strong, bold movie, with the courage to make us laugh, think, fear, and feel at once.

TOM O'BRIEN

SO MANY BOOKS, SO LITTLE TIME

Beckoned by the mother tongue

PAUL BAUMANN

Ted Williams, the Boston Red Sox's mercurial genius (he had a lifetime batting average of .344), last ambled to the plate at Fenway Park twenty-nine summers ago. Williams was forty-two, had played for twenty-two years, but could still hit .316, with 29 homers, in his final season. Such are the marks of the anointed.

In the stands, sitting behind third base with his "machete of a face," was rookie novelist John Updike, gifted with a charism of another sort. Updike, as he wrote in "Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu" for *The New Yorker*, was there as a fan as well as a correspondent. Williams—the only man since 1925 to bat over .400 (in 1941)—was a much-savored childhood hero. Growing up in distant Shillington, Pennsylvania, Updike followed Williams's feats in the box scores, and once witnessed a Williams home run from the bleachers of Philadelphia's Shibe Park. "The trajectory seemed qualitatively different from anything anyone else might hit," Updike wrote.

In marrying power and average, Williams may have been the best hitter baseball has ever seen. "He radiated, from afar, the hard blue glow of high purpose," for Updike. He went to Fenway that September day in 1960 expecting a miracle, and he got one. In his last professional at bat, Williams hit a home run. "Our noise for some seconds went beyond excitement into a kind of immense open anguish, a wailing, a cry to be saved," the future author of *Self-Consciousness* reported.

In talent, tenacity, and professionalism as well as prolific production, there are obvious similarities between Updike and his baseball hero. But first to the box score. The author of *Rabbit Run* and *Couples* sends the ball soaring into the blue-black twilight in *Self-Consciousness*. This is a wonderful book, right down to its author's hymn singing and decaying teeth. *Self-Consciousness*, Updike's gracious memoirs, has a trajectory qualitatively different from anything anyone else might have written.

Like the injury-plagued Williams Updike has been hobbled, almost chronically, and somewhat comically, by all manner of infirmities. He calls them "defects," and it is with this gross physical sense of unworthiness that the saga of self-consciousness begins. Body and soul, as any Updike reader knows, have an intimate, if mysterious, connection.

Best known of these ailments is his psoriasis, the subject of the essay "At War with My Skin," which originally appeared in *The New Yorker*. Growing up with psoriasis, a metabolic skin disorder that produces spotting and scaling, made him feel a "monster." He attributes an eagerness to marry (at twenty-one), a quick brood of children (four), and even his unorthodox move from New York City to Ipswich, Massachusetts, while still an unestablished writer, to his scabrous insecurity. On the beaches near Ipswich, Updike took his sun cures.

But psoriasis competed with a host of other tics in deepening the confessed narcissism of this admittedly timid, "small-town" boy. He stammered and stuttered. Even as an adult, having thought himself free of the mild speech impediment, he sputtered guiltily when talking to his chil-

Books Discussed in this Column

Self-Consciousness, *John Updike, Alfred A. Knopf, $18.95, 257 pp.*

Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language, *Eva Hoffman, E.P. Dutton, $18.95, 280 pp.*

Dancing at the Edge of the World, *Ursula K. Le Guin, Grove Press, $19.95, 302 pp.*

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dren after his divorce. Like his grandmother, he had a tendency to choke on his food. He was claustrophobic. He had an abnormal (depending on your own tolerance) fear of spiders and insects, and a terror of swimming. As a man in his twenties, he was humbled by asthma and relied on an inhaler. Insomnia is mentioned. His teeth, neglected during the threadbare war years, are the object of continual, and painful, reconstruction. He has exceptionally large nerves, according to his dentist.

But with an apologist's taste for paradox, Updike claims his psoriasis-induced self-regard served a greater good. "A writer's self-consciousness, for which he is much scorned, is really a mode of interestedness, that inevitably turns outward." He may have preened, but as a result he also ogled—and in shedding his barbarous skin, a writer emerged.

Updike faces his critics directly, and in a fair-minded fashion. He may write like an angel, but he has nothing important to say, goes the refrain. He's middlebrow. A patrician, he lacks empathy for the disenfranchised. He hasn't suffered enough. His "ironical Christian perspective" is mere bourgeois convenience.

Updike counters these charges by reminding his readers he comes from a poor, Depression-beaten, family. An only child, he grew up under what he calls "some terrible pressure of American disappointment." Like most Americans touched by it, Updike is not sentimental about poverty, and is happy to be clear of it. He was raised on comic books and schoolyard roof ball, not in museums and prep schools. His conventional upbringing and artistic temperament propelled him into suburbia as a "literary spy." His first marriage, to the daughter of a politely skeptical Unitarian clergyman, was his initiation into privilege and liberalism. He remained ambivalent about both, convinced that life does not yield up its secrets to the merely kind-hearted and well-educated. Unitarianism was too cool and rational for him. The object of faith, Updike protested to his father-in-law, must "have some concrete attributes."

Those attributes often seem to be the real subject of this memoir. For in Updike's own mischievous, intellectually provocative way, he has written a pious book—a prayer of acknowledgment and thanksgiving.

Updike begins with a rainy night in Shillington, where as a grown man he wanders the streets conjuring up the numinous landmarks and figures of his "essential self." "I had propelled my body through the tenderest parts of a town that was also somewhat my body," he writes. "Yet my pleasure was innocent and my hope primitive."

Updike's style may be baroque, but his willingness to rediscover such innocent pleasures goes a long way toward explaining his virtues as a writer. Later he asserts: "What small faith I have has given me what artistic courage I have." And in these memoirs the reader is humbled by this writer's capacity for happiness, his eagerness to embrace the world, his seeming fearlessness in work and love. No small gifts in an age as triumphantly materialistic, as sourly enlightened as ours. There is a rare ardor, born of faith, in the way he feels and sees things.

His has been a fortunate life, without question. But the self's responsibility, he concludes in the book's last sentence, is to appreciate—to appreciate what has been given. Updike sees the world as sign and symbol, dedicated to the greater glory of God, and bequeathed by God to us for our pleasure. Take and eat, says the Lord. And Updike does.

That heightened sense of appreciation is no ordinary thing, no casual benediction offered over a smug display of wealth. It includes the hidden, the "squeamish" side of things. Hence, Updike's notorious appetite for sexual description, and his almost antinomian tolerance. "These shameful things were intrinsic to life," he writes, "and though I myself was somewhat squeamish about sex and violence and religion...they must be faced, it seemed to me, and even embraced."

In Updike's curious asceticism, even his leprous condition occasions thankfulness. "Only psoriasis could have taken a very average little boy, and furthermore a boy who loved the average, the daily, the safely hidden, and made him into a prolific, adaptable, ruthless-enough writer." Even in the "mud" of psoriasis, sexuality, and every other corruption, a hidden purpose is at work.

Updike writes fervently of the terrors of oblivion that unmanned him as a young father and husband. "To give myself brightness and air I read Karl Barth and fell in love with other men's wives," he confesses. A fitful believer, Barth, Unamuno, Kierkegaard, and Chesterton gave him shelter. Like Barth and Chesterton, Updike knows man's first instinct—to worship and praise—is his first duty. Morality and religion are not the same thing. "Religion includes, as its enemies say, fatalism, an acceptance and consecration of what is," he writes. He knows that to grasp the elusive self—and to keep oblivion at bay—he must receive this world, this life, as a gift. Such is his extravagant, extreme, and unreasoning faith, a faith that, in his case, has made what was once deemed unworthy glorious. More than the smooth-skinned, Updike knows what it means to put on an incorruptible body. He believes in a God of the living, a God who says Yes and offers a blessing. "I accepted that blessing," Updike writes.

The further pleasures of *Self-Consciousness* are abundant, including a sharp juxtaposition of the romance of faith and the dowdy miseries of actual churchgoing. Most disarming, perhaps, is the essay "On Not Being a Dove," in which Updike, the loyal, class-conscious Democrat, retraces his objections to the antiwar movement.

"This great roughly rectangular country severed from Christ," is how Updike finally envisions his subject as a novelist. He has plenty to say about it. Though scarred and phobic, he emerges from these pages as one of the last of the .400 hitters.

A different journey but a similar destination is the subject of Eva Hoffman's rarefied but always compelling autobiography, *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language*. Hoffman's is a spiritual quest whose landmarks—Europe and America, totalitarianism and democracy, persecution and sanctuary, high culture and low—are potentially more dramatic than Updike's. An editor of *The New York Times Book Review*, Hoffman writes with subtlety and precision. While

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possessing a novelist's understanding of the inner life, her firsthand knowledge of how different cultures shape individual identity gives her an anthropologist's concern for epistemology and social structure.

Hoffman emigrated with her family from Poland to Canada in 1959. She was thirteen, and her family was eager finally to escape the unrepentant anti-Semitism of their homeland. They established themselves, with difficulty, in Vancouver, British Columbia, among a "small Duddy Kravitz community of Polish Jews." Adept at school and with real talent as a pianist, she won a scholarship to Rice University in Houston, where she excelled. Rice immersed her in the bewildering fluidity of American society, introducing her to our peculiar forms of estrangement. Harvard and a Ph.D. in English, the turmoil of the late sixties, marriage, divorce, the consolations of psychiatry, and the often solitary life of a professional single woman in New York City follow.

As an immigrant and the child of Holocaust survivors, Hoffman was doubly taxed to make sense of America's cult of innocence and our foreshortened historical perspective. Establishing an identity and making a new life in a new language was more than a practical adjustment. Her American refuge threatened to obliterate her own essential self, the self lovingly nurtured in Cracow, the place that, like Updike's Shillington, she knows like an extension of her own body.

Polish is the language in which her soul first discovered itself, tested its will against the world's. To abandon that language—for her to think, not merely speak, in English—means the loss of something that America, despite its cherished freedoms, cannot replenish. "In my lush Western Sahara, I'm confronting a tantalizing abundance that doesn't fill, and a loneliness that carves out a scoop of dizzying emptiness inside."

Hoffman's descriptions of the density, the solidity of Polish life are delicious. Postwar Poland remained a preindustrial society where being—even in the midst of economic and political disorder—somehow was still more important than striving. Everyday life in Cracow was thick with intrigue and complicity, vibrant with spiritual and erotic possibilities. Her elegant and self-possessed mother supervised the home, gossiping with friends, instructing and confiding in her two daughters, and feuding with the peasant maids who slept in the kitchen. In Cracow, the woman's presence in the home lent a formidable dignity and absolute value to domestic life. Cracow was an intense, thickly woven world of social obligation and expectation, with a frank regard for class and status. There is no word in Polish, Hoffman observes, for "self-sufficiency." The dream that lies at the heart of an American's striving—what Hoffman calls elsewhere the "illusion of being undetermined"—doesn't exist for Poles. Meaning is "interhuman and comes from the thickness of human connections." Even under the crushing weight of totalitarian control, Polish life had a resonance, both personal and social, not easily found in liberated America.

Initially one objects to Hoffman's juxtaposing a heroic, formal, and tragic Poland with a haplessly colloquial, trite, and materialistic America. But her eye is remarkable. She can brilliantly tease out the hidden dissonance in the most placid suburban landscape. "To me, these interiors seemed oddly flat, devoid of imagination, ingenuous. The spaces are so plain, low-ceilinged, obvious; there are no curves, niches, odd angles, nooks or crannies—nothing that gathers a house into itself, giving it a sense of privacy, or of depth—of interiority...the unintended effect is thin and insubstantial—as if it was planned and put up just yesterday, and could just as well be dismantled tomorrow."

Hoffman is a wizard at letting us see ourselves in a new context. America is a big, rough, and complicated country, where people find it difficult to forge lasting ties. To the extent we are disconnected from those around us, we become strangers to ourselves. In Poland, the frame of culture holds a person more firmly in place. Poles may not like how they live, but they know who they are. Americans, overwhelmed by possibilities, are never

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quite sure of their identities.

America is a postmodern world, Hoffman concludes, and demands a "multivalent consciousness." Life is no longer a simple linear narrative, but a mosaic. With its ever shifting point of view and sophisticated presentation of time, *Lost in Translation* is meant to reflect that reality. It's a masterly performance. If an objection can be made, it might be that Hoffman has adjusted too well. To the extent that meaning, as she concedes, is a measure of the thickness of human connections, her story has a poignant transparency. Hoffman knows that, and accepts it.

Ursula K. Le Guin's collection of essays, talks, and reviews, *Dancing at the Edge of the World*, takes us, both figuratively and physically, to another part of the world. Le Guin, a science-fiction novelist, lives in Oregon and considers California her spiritual home. Her writing exhibits a wonderfully open and unpretentious western American sensibility. She has an interest in this continent's natural history and prehistoric past that is, in part, a family tradition. Her father was a noted anthropologist, and her mother, Theodora Kroeber, a novelist and the author of *Ishi*. Le Guin, now turning sixty, has written fifteen novels as well as poetry and children's books. Her criticism in *Dancing* is sharp. She rejects, accurately I think, the "hollow sound," the "Inside Club"-tone of C.S. Lewis. She is admiring and sympathetic, but unpersuaded by Doris Lessing's science fiction. With mild reservations, Italo Calvino impresses her. These judgments carry weight.

Le Guin possesses impeccable feminist credentials. But she is a feminist with an eccentric regard for "housework." Other traditional expressions of womanliness are also praised. A certain apocalyptic shading does creep in, however, and Le Guin is not above using terms like "psychopathic social system," "masculinist," or "machoman." Her utopianism, with its airy brief for a noncoercive exercise of authority, is unconvincing. She can be cranky—one of her best qualities, actually—and her remarks on writing are occasionally marred by some cheap shots at Hemingway, Joyce, and others. Toward the academic priesthood and questions of literary theory, she is polite, informed, and unmoved. After all, this is a writer who has used Mom de Plume as a pseudonym.

But while she may wear her politics, both feminist and environmental, on her permissive sleeve, Le Guin is no propagandist. Many of the pieces in the book, a compilation of material stretching back to 1976, are much more than occasional remarks. "The Fisherman's Daughter," which touches on her mother's writing as well as the general predicament of women writers, is polemical and invigorating. So is "A Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cold Place to Be." "The Space Crone," an iconoclastic exploration of the meaning of menopause, is bold and allusive. Like Updike, Le Guin makes room for the sacred.

Her commencement addresses at Bryn Mawr and Mills College are funny and smart and say many necessary things. "Instead of talking power," she tells Mills's graduates, "what if I talked like a woman right here in public. It won't sound right. It's going to sound terrible."

At Bryn Mawr she elaborates on her theory of language. She calls the language of rational thought and objectivity the "father tongue." It has its uses, she admits. But they are circumscribed. "Reason is a faculty far larger than mere objective thought," she cautions. Speaking of the most important things in life in the language of success and power is poisonous. "The language of the fathers, of Man Ascending, Man the Conqueror, Civilized Man, is not your native tongue. It isn't anybody's native tongue." No, we first learn the mother tongue, the language of "women's work; earthbound, housebound." Le Guin, in her utopian passion, wants the dignity of that language restored. "The mother tongue, spoken or written, expects an answer. It is conversation, a word the root of which means 'turning together.'"

Le Guin has a tongue sharp enough to illuminate such welcome and elemental realities as hearth and home. That mother tongue is spoken by Updike and Hoffman as well. □

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Vic and Robyn go to work

NICE WORK
David Lodge
Viking, $18.95, 277 pp.

Fred Siegel

It's rare that we can turn to fiction for help on a practical problem. But if you thought yourself a literate person and yet are too embarrassed to admit that you haven't the faintest idea what some of your literary friends mean when they carry on about some trendy theory called deconstruction; if you've suffered the special disdain reserved for the uninitiated when you admit to being mystified by the deconstructionist claim that "you are what you speak" or even more mysteriously that "you are what speaks you," David Lodge's new novel may be just the ticket.

Like David Lodge's earlier comic novels, *Changing Places* and *Small World*, *Nice Work* is largely set in the academy, though the writing is anything but academic. Lodge, who has a fine feel for social detail, is a sprightly writer with a sharp sense of comic juxtaposition. In *Nice Work*, which was shortlisted for Britain's prestigious Booker Prize, he brings together two unlikely soulmates, Robyn Penrose, a young, strikingly attractive Cambridge-trained Temporary Lecturer in English Literature at a down-at-the-heels provincial British university, and the unprepossessing Vic Wilcox, a middle-aged manager of a middle-sized machine foundry in the British Midlands.

Lodge's Robyn, a Marxist-feminist-deconstruction specialist in the nineteenth-century industrial novel, is a woman of great character and individuality who feels compelled to argue—on the basis of theory, of course—that both character and individuality are bourgeois myths. For his part, Vic, a taut terrier of a man, is a dogged utilitarian who, struggling to keep a failing foundry alive, has contempt for the university in proportion to his admiration for Margaret Thatcher. Robyn and Vic are thrown together when in the spirit of Thatcherism the government creates a plan to bring the universities and businesses closer together. Robyn, the specialist in the industrial novel who has never been in a factory, is selected to bridge the gap between the two terrains by following Vic Wilcox around.

The clash between the two which drives the first half of the novel creates some memorable confrontations as Robyn, who is economically illiterate, and Vic, who is culturally illiterate, each—initially the unself-conscious product of their respective institutions—try to batter each other into intellectual submission. For Robyn as for the deconstructionists, for whom all the world is simply an extension of language, the factory "is just another set of metonymies and synecdoches." "It hardly needs to be pointed out," Robyn tells her class, "that industrial capitalism is phallocentric...the factory chimney is also metaphorically a phallic symbol." Capitalism, in short, screws its workers. In one particularly powerful exchange, Robyn, who has begun to realize that Vic is a man of some integrity, tries to explain why his treatment of workers is morally unacceptable. But to her dismay, when confronted not with metaphor but with the pressing reality of an Asian worker about to be unjustly fired, she finds she is forced to appeal to Vic with a "suspiciously humanist train of thought" that deconstructionists were taught to dismiss as an "instrument of bourgeois hegemony."

Lodge is engaged in a double mission for most of the first two-thirds of *Nice Work*. He's teaching some of the economic facts of life to the professors of goodthink while instructing the Gradgrinds of the world about how even the most hard-boiled of men—consider the metaphor—are partly shaped by the words they use. Underlying this mission of reconciliation is a sense that for all their differences Robyn and Vic are both products of an industrial England threatened by Thatcherism. For both Vic and Robyn the manufacturing world provides the structure of discipline, the moral matrix which creates meaning for their lives. But both—Robyn loses her university job in a funding crunch and Vic is fired when his company is swallowed up in a takeover—seem to have no place in the new Thatcherite England in which the paper economy of the financial markets rules the roost.

Though Lodge sustains a high quality of writing throughout, the last third of the book falters as the hard edge of the two characters' mutual disdain dissolves in a warm bath of reconciliation. Everyone becomes simply too nice. Robyn learns something of the relentless logic of economic competition from Vic. Vic becomes fascinated with literature, awakens to his emotions and is genuinely swayed by what Robyn has said about women, and removes the porno posters from the factory walls. Good Grief!

One of the cardinal tenets of deconstructionism is that we are trapped inside language so that all writing refers to earlier writing. To that extent *Nice Work*, a late-twentieth-century "condition of England" novel, that revolves around the arguments advanced by a character studying the nineteenth-century "condition of England" novel, fits the mold nicely. But even as it fits the format, it breaks it by illustrating as no essay can the almost comic limitations of a theory meant to be left in the seminar room. This is a book of gentle humor by a writer who instructs even as he entertains. □

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IN A DIFFERENT LEAGUE

YOU GOTTA HAVE WA
Robert Whiting
Macmillan, $17.95, 339 pp.

Rachelle Linner

Boston's major baseball story this spring was the relationship and pending law suit of Wade Boggs and Margo Adams. Adams's threatened revelations about other players caused such serious dissension and low morale that Red Sox management tried to trade Boggs. Despite his legendary batting average, Boggs's personal difficulties were such liabilities that a trade was unsuccessful. Boggs remarked that, were he not wanted here, he could always go play in Japan "for a lot more money."

If he does still harbor such fantasies, Wade Boggs would do well to read *You Gotta Have Wa*. *Wa*—the Japanese word that means unity, harmony, and team spirit—is as important in Japanese baseball as are bats, balls, and strike zones, and it was the *wa* of the Red Sox that Boggs had disturbed. As Robert Whiting so clearly illustrates, American baseball teams have a far greater tolerance for damaged *wa* than do the Japanese, for whom baseball is less a recreational sport than a "moral discipline."

Baseball arrived in Japan in 1873 and remained an amateur sport until 1934. Likened to traditional martial arts because it requires "a special harmony of mental and physical strength," baseball has been deemed by the Ministry of Education as "good for the national character" and helpful in "developing purity and self-discipline." The modern legacy of this tradition is the annual summer high-school baseball championships held in Koshien Stadium near Osaka. So passionate is the devotion of the Japanese public that writers "wax maudlin" about Koshien as the "ultimate crucible of youth," an "ode to fighting spirit," "a celebration of the purity...of Japanese youth." One television commentator said it was "evidence that old values have not yet been swept away by the wave of internationalization that has hit Japan."

One expression of that wave is that each of Japan's twelve professional teams is allowed to have two foreign players. The experiences of those men, mostly major league veterans, are the core of this well-written anecdotal book. Among those interviewed are Warren Cromartie, Bob Horner, Reggie Smith, Leon Lee, Charlie Manuel, and Don Blasingame. The American big-league game is one of challenge: "You throw me your best stuff. I'll see if I can hit it," a decided contrast to the cautious game played in Japan, "a step-by-step approach that seemed to reflect the conservative bent of Japanese society as a whole....It was designed to avoid unpleasant confrontations and embarrassing mistakes."

American players in Japan face a public that suspects them of being "greedy and disloyal" and lacking "fighting spirit." The local sports press suggests these players are "no longer wanted" in the U.S., and is quick to pounce on their mistakes "like avenging warrior monks." For some Americans, their interpreters are their only cultural teachers. They must deal with managers who are "baseball hypochondriacs" and coaches who insist that all players endure the same rigorous, exhaustive training. They must face the visible and invisible barriers that keep them from "winning titles, breaking records, or otherwise gaining recognition." Most frustrating are the umpires who, Leon Lee reports, "make your strike zone wider the higher your batting average is. The umpires will see to it because you're not supposed to outshine the Japanese." Independent, aggressive, known to fight and curse, few American players return to their homeland with fond memories of Japan.

Whiting writes an interesting and entertaining baseball book, but he purports to do something more: to use baseball, this shared sport, as a metaphor for the cultural differences between Japan and the United States. He provides ample illustration of how Japanese culture influences the type of baseball they play, how the "cookie-cutter approach and fabled 'team spirit' philosophy" that works so well in manufacturing, hampers the way they play baseball. "Japanese-style quality control means that everyone has to do everything the same way," he writes. "No one is allowed to think for himself. Nothing is left to chance or individual need. Managers and coaches demand blind obedience to traditional methods, and the players who don't go along are weeded off the assembly line. The result is a passive approach to playing baseball."

Because the Japanese take the "purity" of baseball so seriously, and because the presence of American players is so problematic to them, the vehemence with which these issues are addressed and the gravity they assume are targets of Whiting's ironic tone, which at points slides into mockery. If he were writing a cultural study he could have elucidated for us why a college professor sees in Reggie Smith's behavior: "American attitudes of superiority

> *Clubhouse walls are covered with slogans to spur the players on: Without Self-Sacrifice There Can Be No Real Team; You Are The Master of Your Own Fate; Cry in Practice, Laugh in the Games; Self-Reflection Is the Bread of Progress.*
>
> *To Americans used to the notion that an individual is responsible for himself and that his performance on the field is the only thing that matters, the Japanese system can seem incredibly restrictive....*
>
> *For Americans baseball is a job. For the Japanese it is a way of life.*
>
> —Robert Whiting
> *You Gotta Have Wa*

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toward Japanese in general...The Americans are making fools of the Japanese and baseball is only one example. They think of the Japanese as 'yellow' and as 'acting like monkeys,' so naturally a baseball player like Smith says, 'Sure. Give me two hundred million yen and I'll do a little dance for baseball'...Japanese are being held cheaply all the way from the prime minister's office to the world of baseball.'"

Or why, when former Milwaukee Brewer Dick Davis attacked a pitcher whose fast ball had hit his elbow, one columnist equated Davis's behavior to a national insult: "This is Japan, not America....Foreigners should obey our customs. The ball field should be regarded as sacred and violence on its premises never allowed. Davis is making light of Japan and the Japanese and that is unbearable."

Without descending to such heights of rhetoric, Robert Whiting obviously enjoyed "making light of Japan and the Japanese" insofar as their baseball is concerned. It makes good sports lore but poor cultural analysis. □

THE TRUTH OF SAGES

OTHER PEOPLE'S MYTHS
The Cave of Echoes
Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty
Macmillan, $19.95, 225 pp.

Mary Gerhart

Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty's *Other People's Myths* addresses the problem of how we grasp religious meanings in terms of traditional myths and rituals. She offers insights that are both effective and accessible.

O'Flaherty, the first Mircea Eliade Professor of the History of Religions at the University of Chicago, describes myths as potential vehicles of meaning. As such, they are stories which, while they are not literally true, are "as close as we can ever get to the truth about certain subjects." Against those linguists and philosophers who have "hopelessly defamed the character of language as a possible vehicle for mutual understanding," she writes that myth is possibly "our last hope for a nonlanguage that can free us from these cognitive snares, a means of flying so low that we can scuttle underneath the devastating radar of the physical and social sciences and skim close to the ground of the human heart." Myths raise basic questions of human meaning.

This book is about myths (Hindu, Buddhist, Greek, Catholic Christian, and Jewish), particularly as they tell stories about stories (metamyths). Much of the delight in reading *Other People's Myths* comes from its double focus on the kinds of people who attend to myths (who the "we" are who interpret myths), and on traditional myths as they are revised within themselves and as they are related to myths in other traditions. O'Flaherty uses the myth of the hunter and the sage from the *Yogavasishtha*, for example, to make explicit the different ways of "getting inside someone else's head." Although it is impossible for us to know precisely at what level of consciousness we exist, the myth helps us to understand generally that, as hunters, we have to experience things physically in order to understand them; as sages, we might be tempted to think we understand things simply by learning about them, rather than by experiencing them. With respect to scholars of religion, O'Flaherty thinks, "good hunters *do* have sages in them, sages that bring some degree of self-awareness to the hunting; bad hunters do not. But good sages...always have good hunters in them."

O'Flaherty sees myth as viewed in four different ways in modern Western culture: (1) those who are uninterested in myth, who never have or never will take religion seriously; (2) the undemythologized (or still mythologized) who, however critical they may be of flaws in traditional religions, have never lost their "first naiveté." They are, however, usually interested only in their own traditions; (3) the demythologized, who have substituted secular humanism for their "first naiveté." They secretly believe that God is dead and that myths are fraudulent; and (4) the remythologized, those who have lost their "first naiveté" but have subsequently found secular humanism wanting. O'Flaherty believes they are the group most capable of hearing anew what myths have to say.

But what kind of "hearing" is possible? O'Flaherty argues that a growing number of our population is increasingly unfamiliar with and disaffected by not only the myths but also the classics of our own tradition. On this point she agrees with Allan Bloom and other recent authors who lament the decline of the classics. But where Bloom would simply reinstate them, O'Flaherty proposes that we reapproach the classics as "other." (They are, after all, inherited from generations far removed from our own; and sometimes their authors were far removed from their subjects—Homer and Shakespeare both wrote about generations remote to them!) Where Bloom and others would repeat the elite classical canon, O'Flaherty proposes studying it simultaneously with the classics and myths of *other* traditions, thereby assisting the defamiliarization process and making possible a new hearing—new in the sense of "anew" and also of new texts.

To see O'Flaherty's proposal at work, we have only to read chapter five, "Other People's Rituals: Daksha, Pentheus, and Jesus." Her brilliant reading of Daksha and Shiva, Pentheus and Dionysius, and Jesus demonstrates the fecundity of her approach.

Chapter three, "Other People's Classics: Retelling the Mahabharata," is also a comparative study—here, of the transmission of myths and classics, past and present, in our culture and in that of India. O'Flaherty uses her scholarly expertise to dismantle false assumptions: first, that classics form a tradition of which there is a "fixed core" of written texts; and sec-

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ond, that classics are shared by all members of the educated community. Against the first pretension, O'Flaherty argues that classics have been valued for different reasons, read with diametrically opposed interpretations, and are constantly undergoing a process of demotion and reinstatement. Writing, moreover, is not the only means of transmission—in some cultures, it is not even the major means. O'Flaherty points out that very few in our culture read the Greek and English classics in the original, whereas millions follow "Dallas" or some cartoon or television serial. Classics, in other words, do not, in fact, form a cohesive community of texts or readers.

This is a sprightly book, replete with references to popular culture. It affords many pleasures, not the least of which is its opening of several vexed issues to new questions and new views. □

LEAVING ONE'S MARK

A MYTH OF INNOCENCE
Mark and Christian Origins
Burton L. Mack
Fortress, $29.95, 432 pp.

Dennis C. Duling

There is a very widespread view among New Testament scholars that many groups in Judaism at the time of Jesus believed that the end of the world was coming; that Jesus himself was an apocalyptic prophet who announced that the kingdom was near; and that the earliest church continued the apocalyptic emphasis until the march of history made it less viable.

The apocalyptic theory of Jesus and Christian origins is a crucial backdrop for an intriguing new book by Burton Mack of the School of Theology at Claremont, California. Intended for "both colleagues and after-hours thinkers at large," *A Myth of Innocence* formulates a very different argument about Jesus and the first forty years of Christianity. In brief, Mack contends that Jesus was a teacher from predominantly Gentile Galilee, a countercultural figure who combined Hebrew and Cynic wisdom; the dominant apocalyptic view of Jesus was a later, imaginative creation of the early church and especially "Mark," an intellectual who synthesized various traditions and reworked them into a complex myth which became the charter document for a small apocalyptic sect in southern Syria just after 70 A.D.

Though *A Myth of Origins* is not primarily a book about Jesus, it begins with and says a great deal about him and his immediate environment. For example, in contrast to commonly held theories, Mack marshals arguments to present us with a distinctive view of Galilee. It was *not* a hotbed of political revolution; it was *not* dominated by apocalyptic fervor; it was *not* permeated with conceptions of *the* Messiah or *the* kingdom to come; and despite the impression left by the Markan Gospel, there were *not* many Pharisees there waiting to entrap Jesus. The area, in fact, had become "an epitome of Hellenistic culture."

Correspondingly, Jesus was no political revolutionary, no apocalyptic prophet of the kingdom, and no self-styled rabbi in conflict with the Pharisees of the synagogue. Rather, he was a very distinctive wisdom teacher. (Recent research argues that the earliest layer of the source "Q" is "aphoristic" wisdom.) Traditional proverbial wisdom (Greek *sophia*) rests on ancestral authority and reinforces cherished social norms and values; Jesus, however, taught in aphorisms that rested on his own individual authority and personal insight, and like Cynic wisdom (*métis*), his teaching subtly challenged social norms. According to Mack, "The Cynic analogy repositions the historical Jesus away from a specifically Jewish sectarian milieu and toward the Hellenistic ethos known to have prevailed in Galilee."

The rest of Mack's large volume analyzes the "social formations" of Jesus' followers, the forms of sayings and stories they produced and elaborated as "rationalizations" of their social experiences, and the use made of these forms in the creation of Mark's myth. The followers, who developed their views largely in the context of early Christian meals, were of two major kinds: the "Jesus groups" of the Gospels, located in Palestine and southern Syria close to the traditional center of Jewish piety, Jerusalem; and the "Christ groups" of the Pauline traditions, located in northern Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece.

All of these groups, Mack argues, moved from social critique to "social formation," that is, from initial optimistic activity, to struggle and setback, to polemic and compensatory reaction. In this sequence, the "Jesus groups" of early Christianity attempted to remain within Judaism and proselytize, but were opposed by the Pharisees, were ousted, and ran their course sometime in the fifties or sixties. The "Christ groups," however, borrowed Hellenistic ideas of a divinized martyr-founder, left the Diaspora synagogues of their own volition, and survived, their major conflicts having been internal differences with other Jesus and Christ movements.

Part III probes what Mack thinks is the logical outcome of recent research on Jesus' Passion, namely, that Mark himself has created the Passion story, by merging isolated materials from the Jesus and Christ groups. Briefly, the Christ-group traditions about Jesus' last meal (1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23-26) and his atoning death and Resurrection (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:3-5) were transferred to the Jesus-group traditions about an authoritative figure who came into conflict with the Jewish authorities. This transferral gave rise to a miracle-working King/Son of God who was also an apocalyptic Son of Man who functions at the beginning and end of history. The cleansing of the temple, the betrayal, the arrest, Peter's denials, the trials before the Sanhedrin and Pilate, and the crucifixion account with its prophecy/fulfillment scheme—all were Markan "fictions"; probably only the meal came from pre-

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The next issue of *Commonweal* will be dated September 8.

Markan tradition. Mack concludes that "Mark's Passion narrative is essentially an elaboration of the etiological myth of the Hellenistic cult meal through combination with the wisdom story of the persecuted Righteous One as martyr."

In Mark's new apocalyptic myth of origins, Jesus is at once the seer who announced the kingdom to come and the inaugurator of a new group to whom the secret of the kingdom was given, as well as the first casualty of the final cosmic conflict. The plot has an ironic twist since the powerful, miracle-working king is crucified. Also, the Gospel's stress on the one who saves himself by losing himself may occasionally function as a parabolic challenge to the insiders' "triumphalism, pride, or inordinate desire." However, unlike the parable, Mark's story is not open-ended, that is, its apocalyptic framework implies certain knowledge of the final victory.

Mack concludes his book with some reflections on the Markan legacy. Mark's myth of origins was not about the historical Jesus; it was generated within an apocalyptic sect which had failed to reform the Diaspora synagogues, had become confused about its mission, had developed hostility toward its Jewish opponents, and had withdrawn from the world. Indeed, Mark saw the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. as God's judgment on those who had perpetrated the violent death of the Innocent Victim and as a justification for his sect's own righteous cause. It is true, notes Mack, that through the course of Christian history the myth was often dislodged from its apocalyptic moorings and reimagined, thus functioning in a variety of constructive ways for the churches. It is also true that a secularized version of its yearning for a new time and a new place has helped to produce an amazing chapter in history, the story of America. The danger is that America's reappropriation of the myth, its messianic complex to be "the innocent redeemer of the world," and its judgment of others—especially when combined with raw power—have potentially disastrous consequences.

This is a provocative book. Those with a more traditional theological perspective may find Mack's whole project in danger of reducing theology to sociology, a common criticism of social history that I do not share. In fact, a more generous application of sociological or cultural-anthropological theory, especially in the area of "group formation," would have enhanced Mack's argument.

Does Mack's thesis provide a viable alternative to the apocalyptic view about Jesus and Christian origins? At the moment, this question is probably too directly posed. But I believe Mack's thesis is a catalyst in an important discussion. It should be observed (as Mack is fully aware) that not all the building blocks necessary to establish that Galilee was the "epitome of Hellenistic culture" are fully in place. While the Hellenization of Palestine is now taken for granted, and while there are archaeologists who are working on Hellenized towns in southern Galilee, there are also those who continue to maintain that there was indeed Pharisaic influence there; that Jewish apocalyptic elements in Syro-Palestine could have exerted an impact; and that the parables reflect rural peasant life. One wonders how Jesus and the early Christians were educated! Mack's historical reconstruction, based on the apocalyticization of "Q" at a literary level, is plausible; but it is also possible that early ideas survive in later literary levels, as in the case of the Gospels themselves.

Such musings are in no way meant to detract from Burton Mack's achievement. This is a work of major significance. Its discussions of contemporary research and its synthetic approach to new developments are highly informed and informative, and the book's implications for thinking about early Christian literature, history, and society are revolutionary. It is a complex book, brilliantly conceived and dramatically written. (An aside: apart from the methodological introduction, it, like Mark, has sixteen chapters and its thirteenth chapter deals with apocalyptic eschatology!) Its reflections about the American scene, Judaism, and the world are thoughtful and important. One should not approach this book casually. Those willing to struggle with it and openly consider its thesis, however, will ultimately find it both challenging and rewarding. □

REVIEWERS

FRED SIEGEL's *most recent book is* The Roots of Southern Distinctiveness: Tobacco and Society in Danville, Virginia 1780-1865 *(University of Northern California Press).*

RACHELLE LINNER, *a Boston-based freelance writer (and student of Japanese) is a fan of both the Hiroshima Carps and the Boston Red Sox—in that order.*

MARY GERHART *teaches hermeneutics, religion, and literature at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York.*

DENNIS C. DULING *is professor of religious studies at Canisius College, Buffalo, N.Y.*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 418)

respected magazine *Schweizerische Beobachter*—which, incidentally, opposes the initiative—has just published a series of articles on Switzerland's role in World War II. It documents, among other things, that the Swiss supplied three-quarters of their output of aluminum to the Nazis, along with arms, foodstuffs, and, not least, loans, so that invading Switzerland would have been counterproductive for the Germans. The magazine cites a "truism" of the time—"Six days a week Switzerland works for Germany and on the seventh day it prays for victory for the allies"—but adds a correction: "Between June 1940 and June 1943, Switzerland also worked for Germany on the seventh day."

The role of General Henri Guisan is disputed. It is known that he twice met secretly with SS General Walter Schellenberg. In 1940 he urged the *Bundesrat* to cooperate more fully with the Germans. More generally, there was open sympathy for the Germans at high army and government levels, and a large Nazi movement was tolerated.

Messrs. Owen and O'Brien are no doubt correct that the "Initiative for Switzerland without an Army" will be defeated. It is still remarkable that so unprecedented a

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proposal is on the November ballot, has gained support from a sizable fraction of voters (from 24 percent to 37 percent), is backed by the Greens, the Progressives, and a majority of Social Democrats, and is no longer subjected to shrill ridicule but is taken seriously—not least by the Defense Department, which has reduced the discharge age from 50 to 42 and the peacetime strength of the army from 500,000 to 400,000. A book on the topic by the well-known writer Max Fritsch sold out its first printing of 16,000 copies in two days and remains the country's No. 1 bestseller.

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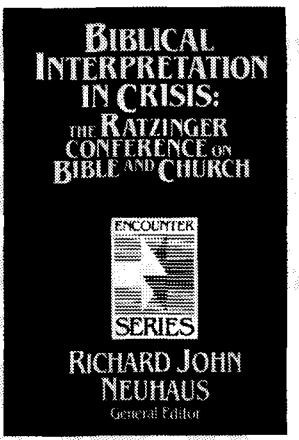

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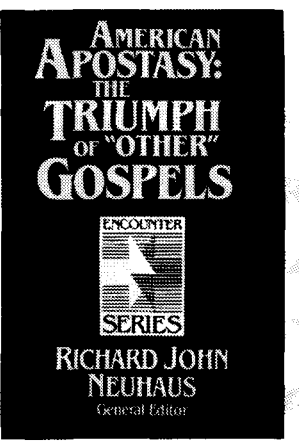

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